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THE CHOUANS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

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THE CHOUANS

BY

H. DE BALZAC

WITH ONE HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD
BY LÉVEILLÉ
FROM DRAWINGS BY JULIEN LE BLANT

NEWLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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INTRODUCTION.

VERY much has been written about the life of Honoré de Balzac. It was, however, one of those lives which are almost uneventful in the ordinary sense. He was born at Tours on May 20, 1799, of a family of decent station, but doubtfully entitled to "the particle," and still more doubtfully connected with the seventeenth century essayist, Jean Guez de Balzac. The strong literary vocation which Balzac felt, was favoured even less than is usually the case by his family. In spite of all obstacles, however, and in spite also of long ill-success, which was perfectly well deserved, he continuéd for some ten years and more to write, by himself and in collaboration, but chiefly, if not wholly, under pseudonyms (one of which, "Lord R'hoone," an anagram of Honoré, classes itself pleasantly with O'Neddy and MacKeat), novel after novel. Ten of these have been fished up and reprinted as his *Œuvres de Jeunesse*. I have never succeeded in reading more than one of the ten myself, and I never knew anyone who had read the whole except Mr. Louis Stevenson, who strongly dissuaded me from resuming my attempt. At last, the book, a translation of which is now put before the reader, which was produced by Balzac at the age of thirty, and which was at first entitled *Le Dernier Chouan*, attracted attention and showed, less in its descriptions of adventure than in its picture of the character and manners of the hero and heroine, where the author's true way led. He lived for twenty years longer: to produce with unabated

vigour the wonderful series of works which he himself regimented, so to speak, into a vast structure generally entitled *La Comédie Humaine*, filling forty volumes of close print, subdivided into "Scènes de la Vie Privée," "Scènes de la Vie Politique," etc., and containing about a hundred separate stories of all lengths. From first to last of these there is no failure whatever of the writer's peculiar power, and the last, *Les Parents Pauvres*, is in the judgment of those who admire Balzac most, perhaps the best of all. Almost from the publication of *The Chouans*, the author began to be famous, popular, and well-paid: but despite his astonishing industry, he was always in pecuniary difficulties, arising in part from his speculative tastes and his fancy for travelling and for *bric-à-brac*, in part also from the costly fashion in which he composed, rewriting and again rewriting his stories on the proof-sheets themselves, till the expense of printing sometimes nearly swallowed the profits of the book. Quite towards the end of his life he became somewhat more easy in his circumstances, and a prospect of quieter and happier days was opened up to him by his marriage with a Polish lady, Madame Hanska, whom he had long loved. But his enormous intellectual labour (which was often continued for days and nights together, with hardly any interruption) had been too much for him, and he died suddenly on August 20, 1850. His character was not wholly amiable: or rather it should be said that his intense absorption in his literary work, his speculations (which took the form, not merely of stock exchange gambling, but of sinking money in commercial undertakings), and certain wild schemes of what he called philosophy, which have left considerable mark on his work, produced either a reality or an appearance of egotism which was not agreeable. The two most characteristic anecdotes bearing on this are his gravely demanding and receiving from the young Théophile Gautier half the pay

which Gautier had received for an essay on Balzac, on the plea that he (Balzac) had furnished the subject: and the still better known legend of his saying, "Venons aux choses réelles: parlons d'*Eugénie Grandet*" (his own book), to a friend in misfortune. In fact, his books were his life: and he is in them with an entirety nowhere else paralleled.

These books are far too numerous and complex to be criticised here in detail. Besides the *Comédie Humaine* and the *Œuvres de Jeunesse*, they include three or four plays which had no great success, and an exceedingly remarkable collection of *Contes Drolatiques*, constructed on the model of the tale-tellers of the sixteenth century. In these some judges have been inclined to see work of an almost higher order, speaking from the purely literary point of view, than the *Comédie:* certainly Balzac has nowhere surpassed the wonderful and terrible story of *Le Succube.* Indeed, his short stories are perhaps generally preferable to his long novels, and *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, the *Chef d'Œuvre Inconnu* (itself a masterpiece), *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*, *Une Passion dans le Désert*, *Séraphita*, *La Grande Bretèche*, and others, might be more safely recommended to a beginner desirous of making acquaintance with Balzac, than the longer and more famous *Peau de Chagrin* (an early and admirable book), *Modeste Mignon*, *Eugénie Grandet*, *Les Parents Pauvres* (though as hinted there are many who rate *La Cousine Bette*, the first of the two parts of this, highest of all), *Le Père Goriot*, and others.

It is more suitable in the space which can be here afforded, to discuss briefly the general characteristics of Balzac as a writer and as a novelist. His fame and popularity—which for the last decade of his life, and for more than as long again after his death, were immense, both in France and in Europe—have somewhat declined of late both in his own country and in others: and though it is certain

that with competent judges they will always remain high, it may be doubted whether they will ever with such judges regain their zenith. As a mere writer, Balzac had a very high opinion of himself, that is to say, when he had, as he considered, passed through the novitiate, in which he allowed he could not write at all: and towards the end of his life, he is said to have declared himself one of the three best writers of France. His opinion, even at the time when his vogue was highest, was never shared by the best critics. His style, even at its best, gives constant reminders of the laborious and unnatural process of rewriting and piecing-in which went to its production. It is, as Sainte-Beuve with his usual acuteness in such matters remarks, full of repeated attempts or "shots" at the right phrase, which often go near, but do not quite hit. It very rarely has that unforced effect of the right word in the right place, which is the chief note of the greatest style. It has seldom much music, and indeed can boast of little attraction apart from the matter it conveys, and from a certain evidence which is never absent long, of the author's extraordinary mental vigour, and of the restless and almost demoniac persistence with which he kept that vigour at work. But the beauty of mere style has rarely been claimed for Balzac by his most passionate, never by his most rational, admirers. What they do claim for him is that he was, as some of them say, the first and greatest, as all say, one of the chief students and demonstrators of human hearts, characters, and manners, as they live and move and have their being.

That there is a certain, nay, a great amount of truth in this claim is undeniable.

Vast as is the crowd of personages in the *Comédie Humaine*, it is difficult to conceive anyone, at least anyone whose opinion is of the slightest importance, calling any of them wooden. Whether that which quickens and

animates them is real human blood and breath, or some kind of unholy elixir and inspiration of the author's own devising, is the question between "Balzaciens" and "anti-Balzaciens." But even the latter do not deny that if the novelist has not endowed his creations, or has not invariably endowed them with actual life, with the universal unchallengeable humanity of the personages of the greatest literature, he has, at any rate, galvanized them in a marvellous manner. The quality in Balzac which draws forth the least favourable comments has been put in various ways, serious and epigrammatic. Some one—I do not precisely remember who it is—has called him "the most scientific observer that ever existed of a universe that he has himself created." M. Taine, I think, commends his "beautiful monsters." A very acute and much undervalued, though unequal critic, Philarète Chasles, called him before everything a "*voyant*," a seer, that is to say, a person who beholds visions rather than facts. Sainte-Beuve, in a short but very striking parallel of him with Mérimée, points out the absence in Balzac, and the presence in Mérimée, of the *sentiment personnel du ridicule*, the exactest translation in meaning, if not in words, of our "sense of humour." And there is no doubt that to some critics the limitations insinuated in these remarks are very well marked indeed. They are least perceptible in stories where the supernatural comes in, such as *Séraphita* and *La Peau de Chagrin*, or in stories of distinctly abnormal life, such as *Une Passion dans le Désert*, or *Le Chef d'Œuvre Inconnu*. In books like *Le Père Goriot* and *La Cousine Bette*, it seems to these critics, that, however wonderful the acuteness with which the author has pierced to certain springs of human action, he has concentrated himself too much on the play of these, and has exaggerated it out of proportion, and to the neglect of verisimilitude.

This is, in a somewhat different way, the same charge as that sometimes brought against Dickens, who is indeed the nearest analogue to Balzac in any European literature, different as their modes of procedure appear on the surface. Both had an extraordinary power of noting particular points in human manners and character. Both had a still more extraordinary power of elaborating the studies of human beings which they grounded on these notes: but each allowed his imagination to get out of hand.

In the book which is the special subject of this introduction Balzac is not at his full power, but he is perhaps only the more interesting. Some critics have held that a man never does more attractive work than the first work in which he "finds his way," and certainly this is the case with the English author we have just mentioned. It is not quite the case with Balzac, but it is to a large extent the case. *The Chouans* is, as a story, by no means impeccable. The author is terribly long in getting way on him. The hesitations and calculations of Hulot at the Pilgrim are overdone to an extraordinary degree. Even when the story is fairly launched, the long analytic digressions on Mademoiselle de Verneuil's feelings constantly interfere with it. The besetting sin of description of objects, small and great, from which Balzac never freed himself, and in which a natural tendency was perhaps aggravated by a corrupt following of Scott, is very apparent. But (and this is a sure mark of the great novelist as opposed to the small one) the interest constantly increases, and the last half of the book, though more clumsily "staged," hardly yields to Dumas himself in story interest, while it aims at and in part attains a much higher level of character-drawing in minute lines than Dumas ever attempts. The figure of Marche-à-Terre, too, is almost a masterpiece. The meeting and massacre at the Vivetière, the adventures of the heroine in d'Orgemont's cellar, the

fate of the unlucky Galope-Chopine, the last scene of all, may challenge a high, if not the highest rank among their own class: while, like all Balzac's other efforts in the romantic vein, they have the additional charm, so rare in authors of the purely romantic kind, of an attempt at "analysis" as well.

It is, I say, in the combination of these attempts that the special charm of Balzac lies to those who dispassionately seek the secret of greatness in literature. There is nothing here quite so good as the final scene which gauges Baron Hulot's degradation, and breaks his wife's heart, in *La Cousine Bette*, a scene worth contrasting with the spurious imitations of it in the modern Naturalist School, as well as with the still greater examples, to which Balzac could not reach, supplied by Mérimée on one side, and by Flaubert on the other. And it is very important to recognize that Balzac seems to have had the gift of more general attraction than Flaubert and Mérimée. Putting aside altogether those writers who have merely admired him because at a certain time when their own hearts and understandings were wax, it was the proper thing to admire him, there will always remain a considerable number of minds to whom the perfections—more limited in range, more delicate and aristocratic in kind, more subtle, more *literary*—of the authors of *Carmen* and *Madame Bovary* will appeal less than the Titanic endeavours, the undaunted struggles, the abundant, if plebeian fertility, of the author of *Eugénie Grandet*. To attempt to fight out the battle here would be an impossible attempt, and might be an undesirable one, for, after all, the three men are as different in their greatness as Thackeray, Scott, and Dickens. The attempt to take Balzac at the valuation of the huge bid put forward by himself in the title *La Comédie Humaine*, was fore-doomed to failure, and has failed. It was early hinted by shrewd judges, and is being more and

more allowed, that his anthropology was somewhat too much for an age—the peculiar and limited French and European age of the triumph of *bourgeois* Liberalism and the July Monarchy over the still surviving relics of aristocracy—and too little for all time. He is not an impeccable writer like Gautier almost always; an impeccable story-teller like Dumas at his best; but he is Balzac:—that is to say, an example high in degree and unique in kind of the genius which combines precision and exactitude of observation with imaginative and creative fertility.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

Note or Postscript.—In signing a companion volume to the present (a version of the "Chronique de Charles IX.") I have acknowledged the pleasure which such an exercise in translation gives as a change from the routine work of journalism. It is impossible to say that translating Balzac is quite as amusing as translating Mérimée. The latter belongs to that very small class of accomplished men of letters who, while there is no lack in them of the special literary qualities of their own country, possess in even a greater degree the literary qualities of all literature. However far a version of Mérimée in English may fall short of the original in degree, the translator must be a bungler indeed if there is not some resemblance in kind. With Balzac it is altogether different. He was never, to his dying day, a master of French style: and at the date of "The Chouans" he was merely struggling out of his first inability to wrestle with the task of putting his thoughts into language. The consequence is that his translator is confronted at once with the most unsatisfactory and insoluble of all the problems of translation. Shall he paraphrase, and so smooth away what is characteristic if awkward in the French? Shall he be faithful, and so

*reproduce what is sometimes ungainly in English? I have preferred the latter alternative, and I must abide by it. Whenever I have been unfaithful, I have been sorry for it. Once I mistook—a pardonable mistake, especially for a man whose sight is not good—"*orme*" for "*orne*," and did not notice the mistake till too late to correct it. I repent more for having altered* giberne, *"cartouche-box," on p.* 29, *into "knap-sack," because it seemed to me that the image was thereby rendered more forcibly. I had no business to improve on the text, and I think it will be found that I have very rarely attempted to do so. But if anyone objects to a certain stiffness in parts of the version, I can only say that it is deliberate, and that the "prettifying" which might have made it smoother English, would in my judgment have denaturalized Balzac. The intermingling of such terms as "porte" and "gate," "Comte" and "Count," is also, whether judicious or not, deliberate.*

The text of the original is not well printed, and there are some, though not important, variations in the different editions which I have consulted. I do not know whether the book has ever before been Englished: at any rate, I have seen no such version. To the original there is, I think, only one note, and that not in the author's editions. I have added a few, which might, perhaps, have been multiplied with advantage; and yet so few readers care for notes in a novel, that probably they may seem too many.

CHAPTER I.

THE AMBUSH.

IN the early days of the Year Eight, at the beginning of Vendémiaire, or, to adopt the present calendar, towards the end of September, 1799, some hundred peasants and a pretty large number of townsmen, who had left Fougères in the morning for Mayenne, were climbing the Pilgrim Hill, which lies nearly half-way between Fougères and Ernée, a little town used by travellers as a halfway-house. The detachment, divided into groups of unequal strength, presented a collection of costumes so odd, and included persons belonging to places and professions so different, that it may not be useless to describe their outward characteristics, in

order to lend this history the lively colouring so much prized nowadays, notwithstanding that, as some critics say, it interferes with the portrayal of sentiments.

Some (and the greater part) of the peasants went barefoot, with no garments but a large goatskin which covered them from neck to knee, and breeches of white linen of very coarse texture, woven of yarn so rough as to show the rudeness of the country manufacture. The straight locks of their long hair mingled so regularly with the goatskin, and hid their downcast faces so completely, that the goatskin itself might have been easily mistaken for their own, and the poor fellows might, at first sight, have been confounded with the animals whose spoils served to clothe them. But before long the spectator would have seen their eyes flashing through this mat of hair, like dewdrops in thick herbage; and their glances, while showing human intelligence, were better fitted to cause alarm than pleasure. On their heads they wore dirty bonnets of red wool, like the Phrygian cap which the Republic then affected as an emblem of liberty. Every man had on his shoulder a stout cudgel of knotty oak, from which there hung a long but slenderly filled wallet of linen. Some had, in addition to the bonnet, a hat of coarse felt, with wide brims, and adorned with a parti-coloured woollen fillet surrounding the crown. Others, entirely dressed in the same linen or canvas of which the breeches and wallets of the first party were composed, showed scarcely anything in their costume corresponding to modern civilization. Their long hair fell on the collar of a round jacket with little square side pockets—a jacket coming down no lower than the hips, and forming the distinctive garb of the peasant of the West. Under the jacket, which was open, there could be seen a waistcoat of the same material, with large buttons. Some of them walked in *sabots*, while others, out of thrift, carried their shoes in their hands.

This costume, soiled with long wear, grimed with sweat and dust, and less strikingly peculiar than that first described, had, from the point of view of history, the advantage of serving as a transition to the almost costly array of some few who, scattered here and there amid the troop, shone like flowers. Indeed, their blue linen breeches, their red or yellow waistcoats ornamented with two parallel rows of copper buttons, and shaped like square-cut cuirasses, contrasted as sharply with the white coats and the goatskins of their companions, as cornflowers and poppies do with a field of wheat. Some were shod with the *sabots* which the Breton peasants know how to make for their own use. But the great majority had large hobnailed shoes and coats of very coarse cloth, cut in that old French style which is still religiously observed by the peasantry. Their shirt collars were fastened by silver buttons in the shape of hearts or anchors, and their wallets seemed much better stocked than those of their companions, not to mention that some finished off their travelling dress with a flask (doubtless filled with brandy) which hung by a string to their necks. Among these semi-savages there appeared some townsfolk, as if to mark the limit of civilization in these districts. In round or flat hats, and some of them in caps, with top-boots or shoes surmounted by gaiters, their costumes were as remarkably different, the one from the other, as those of the peasants. Some half-score wore the Republican jacket known as a carmagnole: others, no doubt well-to-do artisans, were clad in complete suits of cloth of a uniform colour. The greatest dandies were distinguished by frocks or riding-coats in green or blue cloth more or less worn. These persons of distinction wore boots of every shape, and swished stout canes about with the air of those who make the best of "Fortune their foe." Some heads carefully powdered, some queues twisted smartly enough, indicated the rudimentary care of personal

appearance which a beginning of fortune or of education sometimes inspires. A looker-on at this group of men, associated by chance and, as it were, each astonished at finding himself with the others, might have thought them the inhabitants of a town driven pell-mell from their homes by a conflagration. But time and place gave quite a different interest to the crowd. An observer experienced in the civil discord which then agitated France would have had no difficulty in distinguishing the small number of citizens on whom the Republic could count in this assembly, composed as it was almost entirely of men who four years before had been in open war against her. One last and striking trait gave an infallible indication of the discordant sympathies of the gathering. Only the Republicans showed any sort of alacrity in their march. For the other members of the troop, though the disparity of their costume was noticeable enough, their faces and their bearing exhibited the monotonous air of misfortune. Townsmen and peasants alike, melancholy marked them all deeply for her own; their very silence had a touch of ferocity in it, and they seemed weighed down by the burden of the same thought—a thought of fear, no doubt, but one carefully dissembled, for nothing definite could be read on their countenances. The sole sign which might indicate a secret arrangement was the extraordinary slowness of their march. From time to time some of them, distinguished by rosaries, which hung from their necks (dangerous as it was to preserve this badge of a religion suppressed rather than uprooted) shook back their hair, and lifted their faces with an air of mistrust. At these moments they stealthily examined the woods, the by-paths, and the rocks by the roadside, after the fashion of a dog who snuffs the air, and tries to catch the scent of game. Then hearing nothing but the monotonous tramp of their silent companions, they dropped their heads once more, and

resumed their looks of despair, like criminals sent to the hulks for life and death.

The march of this column towards Mayenne, the motley elements which composed it, and the difference of sentiment which it manifested, received a natural enough explanation from the presence of another party which headed the detachment. Some hundred and fifty regular soldiers marched in front, armed and carrying their baggage under the command of a "demi-brigadier." It may be desirable to inform those who have not personally shared in the drama of the Revolution, that this title replaced that of "colonel," proscribed by the patriots as too aristocratic. These soldiers belonged to the depôt of a "demi-brigade" of infantry quartered at Mayenne. In this time of discord the inhabitants of the West had been wont to call all Republican soldiers "Blues," a surname due to the early blue and red uniforms which are still freshly enough remembered to make description superfluous. Now the detachment of Blues was escorting this company of men, almost all disgusted with their destination, to Mayenne, where military discipline would promptly communicate to them the identity of temper, of dress, and of bearing which at present they lacked so completely.

The column was, in fact, the contingent extracted with great difficulty from the district of Fougères, and due by it in virtue of the levy which the executive Directory of the French Republic had ordered by virtue of the law of the tenth Messidor preceding. The Government had asked for a hundred millions of money and a hundred thousand men, in order promptly to reinforce its armies, at that time in process of defeat by the Austrians in Italy, by the Prussians in Germany, and threatened in Switzerland by the Russians, to whom Suwarrow gave good hope of conquering France. The departments of the West, known as Vendée and Brittany, with part of Lower Normandy,

though pacified three years before by General Hoche's efforts after a four years' war, seemed to have grasped at this moment for beginning the struggle anew. In the face of so many enemies, the Republic recovered its pristine energy. The defence of the threatened departments had been at first provided for by entrusting the matter to the patriot inhabitants in accordance with one of the clauses of this law of Messidor. In reality the Government, having neither men nor money to dispose of at home, evaded the difficulty by a piece of Parliamentary brag, and having nothing else to send to the disaffected departments, presented them with its confidence. It was perhaps also hoped that the measure, by arming the citizens one against the other, would stifle the insurrection in its cradle. The wording of the clause, which led to disastrous reprisals, was this: "free companies shall be organized in the departments of the West," an unstatesmanlike arrangement which excited in the West itself such lively hostility that the Directory despaired of an easy triumph over it. Therefore, a few days later, it asked the Assembly to pass special measures in reference to the scanty contingents leviable in virtue of the Free Companies clause. So then, a new law introduced a few days before the date at which this story begins, and passed on the third complementary day of the Year Seven, ordained the organization in legions of these levies, weak as they were. The legions were to bear the names of the departments of Sarthe, Orne, Mayenne, Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan, Loire-Inférieure, and Maine-et-Loire: but in the words of the Bill, "being specially employed in fighting the Chouans, they might on no pretext be moved towards the frontiers." All which details, tiresome perhaps, but not generally known, throw light at once on the weakness of the Directory and on the march of this herd of men conducted by the Blues. Nor is it perhaps useless to add that these

handsome and patriotic declarations of the Directory never were put in force further than by their insertion in the *Bulletin des Lois.* The decrees of the Republic, supported no longer either by great moral ideas, or by patriotism, or by terror—the forces which had once given them power—now created on paper millions of money and legions of men, whereof not a sou entered the treasury, nor a man the ranks. The springs of the Revolution had broken down in bungling hands, and the laws followed events in their application instead of deciding them.

The departments of Mayenne and of Ille-et-Vilaine were then under the military command of an old officer who, calculating on the spot the fittest measures to take, resolved to try to levy by force the Breton contingents, and especially that of Fougères, one of the most formidable centres of *Chouannerie,* hoping thereby to weaken the strength of the threatening districts. This devoted soldier availed himself of the terms of the law, illusory as they were, to declare his intention of at once arming and fitting out the "Requisitionaries," and to assert that he had ready for them a month's pay at the rate promised by the Government to these irregular troops. Despite the reluctance of the Bretons at that time to undertake any military service, the scheme succeeded immediately on the faith of these promises—succeeded indeed so promptly that the officer took alarm. But he was an old watch-dog, not easy to catch asleep. No sooner had he seen a portion of the contingent of the district come in, than he suspected some secret motive in so quick a concentration, and his guess that they wished to procure arms was perhaps not ill justified. So without waiting for laggards, he took measures for securing, if possible, his retreat on Alençon, so as to draw near settled districts, though he knew that the growing disturbance in the country made the success of his scheme very doubtful.

Therefore keeping, as his instructions bade him, the deepest silence as to the disasters of the army, and the alarming news from La Vendée, he had endeavoured on the morning with which our story begins, to execute a forced march to Mayenne, where he promised himself that he would interpret the law at his own discretion, and fill the ranks of his demi-

brigade with the Breton conscripts. For this word "conscript," since so famous, had for the first time taken legal place of the term "requisitionary," given earlier to the recruits of the Republic. Before quitting Fougères, the commandant had secretly (in order not to awake the suspicion of the conscripts as to the length of the route) caused his soldiers to provide themselves with ammunition and with rations of bread sufficient for the whole

party; and he was resolved not to halt at the usual resting-place of Ernée, where, having recovered their first surprise, his contingent might have opened communication with the Chouans who were doubtless spread over the neighbouring country. The sullen silence which prevailed among the requisitionaries, caught unawares by the old Republican's device, and the slowness of their march over the hill, excited vehement distrust in this demi-brigadier, whose name was Hulot. All the striking points of the sketch we have given, had attracted his closest attention: so that he proceeded in silence among his five young officers, who all respected their chief's taciturnity. But at the moment when Hulot reached the crest of the Pilgrim Hill, he turned his head sharply, and as though instinctively, to glance at the disturbed countenances of the requisitionaries, and was not long in breaking silence. Indeed, the increasing slackness of the Bretons' march had already put a distance of some two hundred paces between them and their escort. Hulot made a peculiar grimace which was habitual with him.

"What is the matter with these dainty gentlemen?" cried he in a loud tone, "I think our conscripts are planting their stumps instead of stirring them!"

At these words the officers who were with him turned with a sudden movement, somewhat resembling the start with which a sleeping man wakes at a sudden noise. Sergeants and corporals did the like; and the whole company stopped without having heard the wished-for sound of "Halt!" If at first the officers directed their eyes to the detachment which, like a lengthened tortoise, was slowly climbing the hill, they—young men whom the defence of their country had torn with many others from higher studies, and in whom war had not yet extinguished liberal tastes—were sufficiently struck with the spectacle beneath their eyes to leave unanswered a remark of which they did

not seize the importance. Though they had come from Fougères, whence the tableau which presented itself to their eyes is also visible, though with the usual differences resulting from a change in the point of view, they could not help admiring it for the last time, like dilettanti, who take all the more pleasure in music the better they know its details.

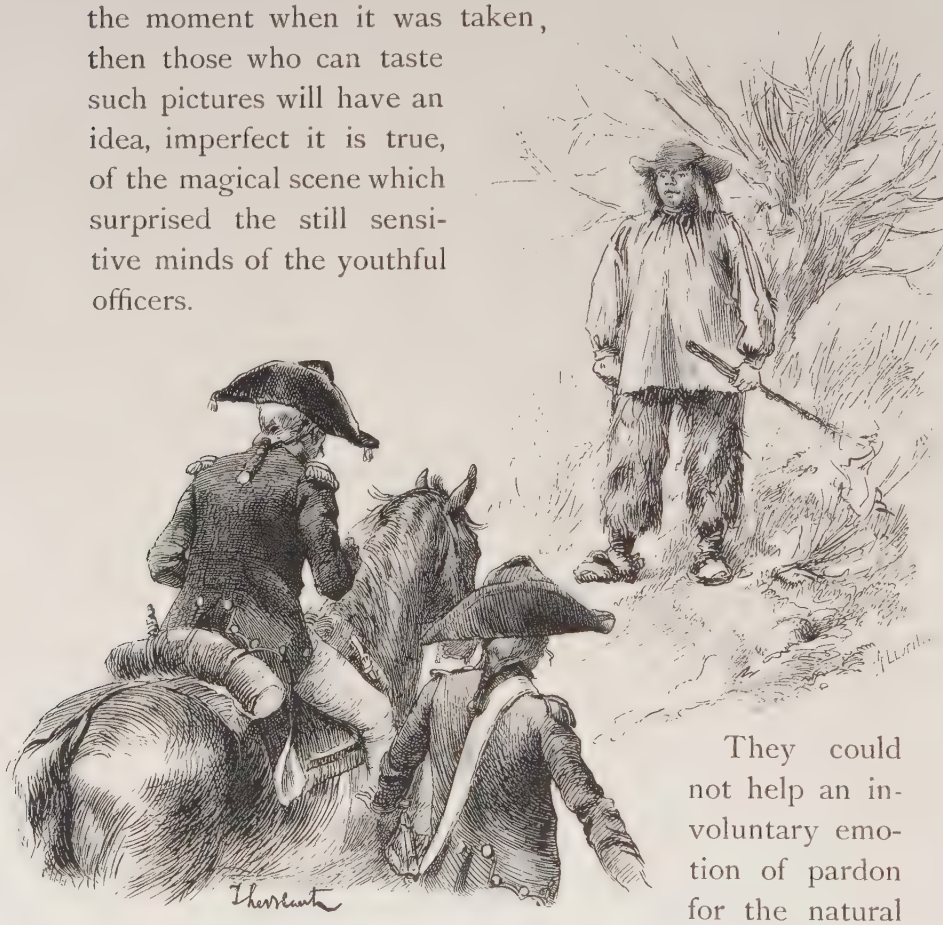
From the summit of the Pilgrim the traveller sees beneath his eyes the wide valley of the Couësnon, one of the culminating points on the horizon being occupied by the town of Fougères, the castle of which dominates three or four important roads from the height which it occupies. This advantage formerly made it one of the keys of Brittany. From their position the officers could descry, in all its extent, a river basin as remarkable for the extraordinary fertility of its soil as for the varied character of its aspect. On all sides, mountains of granite rise in a circle, disguising their ruddy sides under oak-woods and hiding in their slopes valleys of delicious coolness. These rocky hills present to the eye a vast circular enclosure, at the bottom of which there extends a huge expanse of soft meadow, arranged like an English garden. The multitude of green hedges surrounding many properties irregular in size, but all of them well wooded, gives this sheet of green an aspect rare in France, and it contains in its multiplied contrast of aspect a wealth of secret beauties lavish enough to influence even the coldest minds.

At the time we speak of, the landscape was illuminated by that fleeting splendour with which nature delights sometimes to heighten the beauty of her everlasting creations. While the detachment was crossing the valley the rising sun had slowly dissipated the light white mists which in September mornings are wont to flit over the fields. At the moment when the soldiers turned their heads, an invisible hand seemed to strip the landscape of the last of its veils—veils

of delicate cloud like a shroud of transparent gauze, covering precious jewels and heightening curiosity as they shine through it—over the wide horizon which presented itself to the officers. The sky showed not the faintest cloud to suggest, by its silver sheen, that the huge blue vault was the firmament. It seemed rather a silken canopy supported at irregular intervals by the mountain-tops, and set in the air to protect the shining mosaic of field and meadow, stream and woodland. The officers could not weary of surveying this wide space, so fertile in pastoral beauty. Some were long before they could prevent their gaze from wandering among the wonderful maze of thickets bronzed richly by the yellowing foliage of some tufts of trees, and set off by the emerald greenness of the intervening lawns. Others fixed their eyes on the contrast offered by the ruddy fields, where the buckwheat, already harvested, rose in tapering sheaves like the stacks of muskets piled by the soldier where he bivouacs, and divided from each other by other fields where patches of rye, already past the sickle, showed their lighter gold. Here and there were a few roofs of sombre slate, whence rose white smoke. And next the bright and silvery slashes made by the tortuous streams of the Couësnon caught the eye with one of those optical tricks which, without obvious reason, cast a dreamy vagueness on the mind.

The balmy freshness of the autumn breeze, the strong odour of the forests, rose like a cloud of incense, and intoxicated the admiring gazers on this lovely country—gazers who saw with rapture its unknown flowers, its flourishing vegetation, its verdure equal to that of its neighbour, and in one way namesake, England. The scene, already worthy enough of the theatre, was further enlivened by cattle, while the birds sang and made the whole valley utter a sweet low melody which vibrated in the air. If the reader's imagination will concentrate itself so as fully to conceive the

rich accidents of light and shade, the misty mountain horizons, the fantastic perspectives which sprang from the spots where trees were missing, from those where water ran, from those where coy windings of the landscape faded away; if his memory will colour, so to speak, a sketch, as fugitive as the moment when it was taken, then those who can taste such pictures will have an idea, imperfect it is true, of the magical scene which surprised the still sensitive minds of the youthful officers.



They could not help an involuntary emotion of pardon for the natural tardiness of the poor men who, as they thought, were regretfully quitting their dear country to go—perhaps to die—afar off in a strange land: but with the generous feeling natural to soldiers they hid their sympathy under a pretended desire of examining the military positions of the country. Hulot, however, whom we must call the com-

mandant, to avoid giving him the inelegant name of demi-brigadier, was one of those warriors who, when danger presses, are not the men to be caught by the charms of a landscape, were they those of the Earthly Paradise itself. So he shook his head disapprovingly, and contracted a pair of thick black eyebrows which gave a harsh cast to his countenance.

"Why the devil do they not come on?" he asked a second time, in a voice deepened by the hardships of war. "Is there some kind Virgin in the village whose hand they are squeezing?"

"You want to know why?" answered a voice.

The commandant, hearing sounds like those of the horn with which the peasants of these valleys summon their flocks, turned sharply round as though a sword-point had pricked him, and saw, two paces off, a figure even odder than any of those whom he was conveying to Mayenne to serve the Republic. The stranger—a short, stoutly built man with broad shoulders—showed a head nearly as big as a bull's, with which it had also other resemblances. Thick nostrils shortened the nose in appearance to even less than its real length. The man's blubber lips, pouting over teeth white as snow, his flapping ears and his red hair made him seem akin rather to herbivorous animals than to the goodly Caucasian race. Moreover, the bare head was made still more remarkable by its complete lack of some other features of man who has lived in the society of his fellows. The face, sun-bronzed and with sharp outlines vaguely suggesting the granite of which the country side consists, was the only visible part of this singular being's person. From the neck downwards he was wrapped in a *sarrau*—a kind of smock-frock in red linen coarser still than that of the poorest conscripts' wallets and breeches. This *sarrau*, in which an antiquary might have recognized the *saga*,

saye, or *sayon* of the Gauls, ended at the waist, being joined to tight breeches of goatskin by wooden fastenings roughly sculptured, but in part still with the bark on. These goatskins, or *peaux de bique* in local speech, which protected his thighs and his legs, preserved no outline of the human form. Huge wooden shoes hid his feet, while his hair, long, glistening, and not unlike the nap of his goatskins, fell on each side of his face, evenly parted and resembling certain mediæval sculptures still to be seen in cathedrals. Instead of the knotty stick which the conscripts bore on their shoulders he carried, resting on his breast like a gun, a large whip, the lash of which was cunningly plaited, and seemed twice the length of whiplashes in general. There was no great difficulty in explaining the sudden apparition of this strange figure: indeed, at first sight some of the officers took the stranger for a requisitionary or conscript (the two words were still used indifferently) who was falling back on his column, perceiving that it had halted. Still the commandant was much surprised by the man's arrival; and though he did not seem in the least alarmed, his brow clouded. Having scanned the stranger from head to foot, he repeated in a mechanical fashion and as though preoccupied with gloomy ideas, "Yes: why do they not come on? do you know, man?" "The reason," replied his sinister interlocutor, in an accent which showed that he spoke French with difficulty, "the reason is," and he pointed his huge rough hand to Ernée, "that there is Maine, and here Brittany ends."

And he smote the ground hard, throwing the heavy handle of his whip at the commandant's feet. The impression produced on the bystanders by the stranger's laconic harangue was not unlike that which the beat of a savage drum might make in the midst of the regular music of a military band: yet "harangue" is hardly word enough

to express the hatred and the thirst for vengeance which breathed through his haughty gesture, his short fashion of speech, and his countenance full of a cold, fierce energy. The very rudeness of the man's appearance, fashioned as he was as though by axe-blows, his rugged exterior, the dense ignorance imprinted on his features, made him resemble some savage demigod. He kept his seer-like attitude and seemed like an apparition of the very genius of Brittany aroused from a three years' sleep, and ready to begin once more a war where victory never showed herself except swathed in mourning for both sides.

"Here is a pretty fellow!" said Hulot, speaking to himself, "he looks as if he were the spokesman of others who are about to open a parley in gunshot language."

But when he had muttered these words between his teeth, the commandant ran his eyes in turn from the man before him to the landscape, from the landscape to the detachment, from the detachment to the steep slopes of the road, their crests shaded by the mighty Breton broom. Then he brought them back sharply on the stranger, as it were questioning him mutely before he ended with the brusquely spoken question, "Whence come you?"

His eager and piercing eye tried to guess the secrets hidden under the man's impenetrable countenance, which in the interval had fallen into the usual sheepish expression of torpidity that wraps the peasant when not in a state of excitement.

"From the country of the *Gars*," answered the man, quite unperturbed.

"Your name?"

"*Marche-à-Terre.*"

"Why do you still use your Chouan name in spite of the law?"

But Marche-à-Terre, as he was pleased to call himself,

stared at the commandant with so utterly truthful an air of imbecility that the soldier thought he really had not understood him.

"Are you one of the Fougères contingent?"

To which question Marche-à-Terre answered by one of those "I don't know's" whose very tone arrests all further inquiry in despair. He seated himself calmly by the wayside, drew from his smock some pieces of thin and black buckwheat cake—a national food whose unenticing delights can be comprehended of Bretons alone—and began to eat with a stolid nonchalance. He gave the impression of so complete a lack of intelligence that the officers by turns compared him as he sat there to one of the cattle browsing on the fat pasturage of the valley, to the savages of America, and to one of the aborigines of the Cape of Good Hope. Deceived by his air, the commandant himself was beginning not to listen to his own doubts, when, prudently giving a last glance at the man whom he suspected of being the herald of approaching carnage, he saw his hair, his smock, his goatskins, covered with thorns, scraps of leaves, splinters of timber and brushwood, just as if the Chouan had made a long journey through dense thickets. He glanced significantly at his adjutant Gérard, who was near him, squeezed his hand hard, and whispered, "We came for wool, and we shall go home shorn."

The officers gazed at each other in silent astonishment.

It may be convenient to digress a little here in order to communicate the fears of Commandant Hulot to some homekeeping folk who doubt everything because they see nothing, and who might even deny the existence of men like Marche-à-Terre and those peasants of the West whose behaviour was then so heroic. The word *gars* (pronounced *gâ*) is a waif of Celtic. It has passed from Low Breton into French, and the word is, of our whole modern vocabulary, that which contains the oldest memories. The *gais* was the chief weapon of the Gaels or Gauls: *gaisdè* meant "armed;" *gais* "bravery;" *gas* "force,"—comparison with which terms will show the connection of the word *gars* with these words of our ancestors' tongue. The word has a further analogy with the Latin *vir* "man;" the root of *virtus* "strength," "courage." This little disquisition may be excused by its patriotic character: and it may further serve to rehabilitate in some persons' minds terms such as *gars, garçon, garçonnette, garce, garcette,* which are generally excluded from common parlance as improper, but which have a warlike origin, and which will recur here and there in the course of our history. "'Tis a brave wench" (*garce*) was the somewhat misunderstood praise which Madame de Staël received in a little village of the Vendômois, where she spent some days of her exile. Now Brittany is of all France the district where Gaulish customs have left the deepest trace. The parts of the province where, even in our days, the wild life and the superstitious temper of our rude forefathers may still, so to speak, be taken red-handed, are called the country of the *gars*. When a township is inhabited by a considerable number of wild men like him who has just appeared on our scene, the country-folk call them "the *gars* of such and such a parish:" and this stereotyped appellation is a kind of

reward for the fidelity with which these *gars* strive to perpetuate the traditions of Gaulish language and manners. Thus also their life keeps deep traces of the superstitious beliefs and practices of ancient times. In one place, feudal customs are still observed. In another, antiquaries find Druidic monuments still standing. In yet another, the spirit of modern civilization is aghast at having to make its way through huge primæval forests. An inconceivable ferocity and a bestial obstinacy, found in company with the most absolute fidelity to an oath: a complete absence of our laws, our manners, our dress, our new-fangled coinage, our very language, combined with a patriarchal simplicity of life, and with heroic virtues, unite in reducing the dwellers in these regions below the Mohicans and the Redskins of North America in the higher intellectual activities, but make them as noble, as cunning, as full of fortitude as these. Placed as Brittany is in the centre of Europe, it is a more curious field of observation than Canada itself. Surrounded by light and heat, whose beneficent influences do not touch it, the country is like a coal which lies "black-out" and ice-cold in the midst of a glowing hearth. All the efforts which some enlightened spirits have made to win this beautiful part of France over to social life and commercial prosperity—nay, even the attempts of Government in the same direction—perish whelmed in the undisturbed bosom of a population devoted to immemorial use and wont. But sufficient explanations of this ill-luck are found in the character of the soil, still furrowed with ravines, torrents, lakes, and marshes; still bristling with hedges—improvised earth-works, which make a fastness of every field; destitute alike of roads and canals; and finally, in virtue of the genius of an uneducated population, delivered over to prejudices whose dangerous nature our history will discover, and obstinately hostile to new methods of agriculture. The

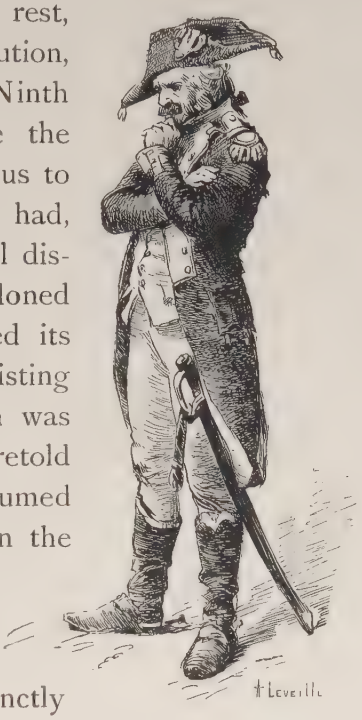
very picturesque arrangement of the country, the very superstitions of its inhabitants prevent at once the association of individuals and the advantages of comparison and exchange of ideas. There are no villages in Brittany; and the rudely-built structures which are called dwellings are scattered all over the country. Each family lives as if in a desert: and the only recognized meetings are the quickly dissolved congregations which Sunday and other ecclesiastical festivals bring together at the parish church. These meetings, where there is no exchange of conversation, and which are dominated by the *Rector*, the only master whom these rude spirits admit, last a few hours only. After listening to the awe-inspiring words of the priest, the peasant goes back for a whole week to his unwholesome dwelling, which he leaves but for work, and whither he returns but to sleep. If he receives a visitor, it is still the Rector, the soul of the country side. And thus it was that at the voice of such priests, thousands of men flew at the throat of the Republic, and that these quarters of Brittany furnished, five years before the date at which our story begins, whole masses of soldiery for the first *Chouannerie*. The brothers Cottereau, bold smugglers, who gave this war its name, plied their perilous trade between Laval and Fougères. But the insurrection in these districts had no character of nobility. And it may be said with confidence that if La Vendée made war of brigandage,[1] Brittany made brigandage of war. The proscription of the royal family, the destruction of religion, were to the Chouans only a pretext for plunder: and the incidents of intestine strife took some colour from the wild roughness of the manners of the district. When real defenders of the

[1] I have done violence to the text here as printed: *Si La Vendée fit un brigandage de la guerre.* But the point of the antithesis and the truth of history seem absolutely to require the supposition of a misprint.—*Translator's Note.*

monarchy came to recruit soldiers among these populations, equally ignorant and warlike, they tried in vain to infuse under the white flag some element of sublimity into the raids which made *Chouannerie* odious: and the Chouans remain a memorable instance of the danger of stirring up the more uncivilized portions of a people. The above-given description of the first valley which Brittany offers to the traveller's eye, the picture of the men who made up the detachment of requisitionaries, the account of the *gars* who appeared at the top of Pilgrim Hill—give in miniature a faithful idea of the province and its inhabitants; any trained imagination can, by following these details, conceive the theatre and the methods of the war; for its whole elements are there. At that time the blooming hedges of these lovely valleys hid invisible foes. Each meadow was a place of arms: each tree threatened a snare, each willow trunk held an ambuscade. The field of battle was everywhere. At each corner gun-barrels lay in wait for the Blues, whom young girls laughingly enticed under fire, without thinking themselves guilty of treachery. Nay, they made pilgrimage with their fathers and brothers to this and that Virgin of worm-eaten wood to ask at once for suggestion of stratagems and absolution of sins. The religion, or rather the fetishism, of these uneducated creatures, robbed murder of all remorse. Thus, when once the strife was entered on, the whole country was full of terrors: noise was as alarming as silence; an amiable reception as threats; the family hearth as the highway. Treachery itself was convinced of its honesty: and the Bretons were savages who served God and the king on the principles of Mohicans on the war-path. But to give a description, exact in all points, of this struggle, the historian ought to add that no sooner was Hoche's peace arranged, than the whole country became smiling and friendly. The very families, who over night had been at each other's throats,

supped the next day without fear of danger under the same roof.

Hulot had no sooner detected the secret indications of treachery which Marche-à-Terre's goatskins revealed, than he became certain of the breach of this same fortunate peace, due once to the genius of Hoche, and now, as it seemed to him, impossible to maintain. So then war had revived, and no doubt would be, after a three years' rest, more terrible than ever. The revolution, which had waxed milder since the Ninth Thermidor, would very likely resume the character of terror which made it odious to well-disposed minds. English gold had, doubtless, as always, helped the internal discords of France. The Republic, abandoned by young Bonaparte, who had seemed its tutelary genius, appeared incapable of resisting so many enemies, the worst of whom was showing himself last. Civil war, foretold already by hundreds of petty risings, assumed an air of altogether novel gravity when the Chouans dared to conceive the idea of attacking so strong an escort. Such were the thoughts which followed one another (though by no means so succinctly put) in the mind of Hulot as soon as he seemed to see in the apparition of Marche-à-Terre a sign of an adroitly laid ambush. For he alone at once understood the hidden danger.



The silence following the commandant's prophetic observation to Gérard, with which we finished our last scene, gave Hulot an opportunity of recovering his coolness. The old soldier had nearly staggered. He could not clear his brow as he thought of being surrounded already by the

horrors of a war, whose atrocities cannibals themselves might haply have refused to approve. Captain Merle and Adjutant Gérard, his two friends, were at a loss to explain the alarm, so new to them, which their chief's face showed; and they gazed at Marche-à-Terre, who was still placidly eating his bannocks at the road-side, without being able to see the least connection between a brute beast of this kind, and the disquiet of their valiant leader. But Hulot's countenance soon grew brighter; sorry as he was for the Republic's ill fortune, he was rejoiced at having to fight for her, and he cheerfully promised himself not to fall blindly into the nets of the Chouans, and to outwit the man, however darkly cunning he might be, whom they did himself the honour to send against him.

Before, however, making up his mind to any course of action, he set himself to examine the position in which his enemies would fain surprise him. When he saw that the road in the midst of which he was engaged, passed through a kind of gorge, not, it is true, very deep, but flanked by woods, and with several by-paths debouching on it, he once more frowned hard with his black brows, and then said to his friends in a low voice, full of emotion:

"We are in a pretty wasps'-nest!"

"But of whom are you afraid?" asked Gérard.

"Afraid?" repeated the commandant. "Yes: afraid is the word. I always have been afraid of being shot like a dog, as the road turns a wood with no one to cry 'Qui vive?'"

"Bah!" said Merle, laughing; "'Qui vive?' itself is a bad phrase!"

"Are we then really in danger?" asked Gérard, as much surprised at Hulot's coolness as he had been at his passing fear.

"Hist!" said the commandant, "we are in the wolf's

throat, and as it is as dark there as in a chimney, we had better light a candle. Luckily," he went on, "we hold the top of the ridge." He bestowed a forcible epithet upon the said ridge, and added, "I shall see my way soon, perhaps." Then, taking the two officers with him, he posted them round Marche-à-Terre; but the *gars*, pretending to think that he was in their way, rose quickly. "Stay there, rascal!" cried Hulot, giving him a push, and making him fall back on the slope where he had been sitting. And from that moment the demi-brigadier kept his eye steadily on the Breton, who seemed quite indifferent. "Friends," said he, speaking low to the two officers, "it is time to tell you that the fat is in the fire down there at Paris. The Directory, in consequence of a row in the Assembly, has muddled our business once more. The pentarchy of pantaloons (the last word is nearer French at any rate) have lost a good blade, for Bernadotte will have nothing more to do with them."

"Who takes his place?" asked Gérard, eagerly.

"Milet-Mureau, an old dotard. 'Tis an awkward time for choosing blockheads to steer the ship. Meanwhile, English signal-rockets are going off round the coast, all these cockchafers of Vendéans and Chouans are abroad on the wing: and those who pull the strings of the puppets

have chosen their time just when we are beaten to our knees."

"How so?" said Merle.

"Our armies are being beaten on every side," said Hulot, lowering his voice more and more. "The Chouans have twice interrupted the post, and I only received my last despatches and the latest decrees by an express which Bernadotte sent the moment he quitted the ministry. Luckily, friends have given me private information of the mess we are in. Fouché has found out that the tyrant Louis XVIII. has been warned by traitors at Paris to send a chief to lead his wild ducks at home here. It is thought that Barras is playing the Republic false. In fine, Pitt and the princes have sent hither a *ci-devant*, a man full of talent and vigour, whose hope is to unite Vendéans and Chouans, and so lower the Republic's crest. The fellow has actually landed in Morbihan: I learnt it before anyone, and told our clever ones at Paris. He calls himself the *Gars*. For all these cattle," said he, pointing to Marche-à-Terre, "fit themselves with names which would give an honest patriot a stomach-ache if he bore them. Moreover, our man is about here: and the appearance of this Chouan" (he pointed to Marche-à-Terre once more) "shows me that he is upon us. But they don't teach tricks to an old monkey: and you shall help me to cage my birds in less than no time. I should be a pretty fool if I let myself be trapped like a crow by a *ci-devant* who comes from London to dust our jackets for us!"

When they learnt this secret and critical intelligence the two officers, knowing that their commandant never took alarm at shadows, assumed the steady mien which soldiers wear in time of danger when they are of good stuff and accustomed to look ahead in human affairs. Gérard, whose post, since suppressed, put him in close relations with

his chief, was about to answer and to inquire into all the political news, a part of which had evidently been omitted. But at a sign from Hulot he refrained, and all three set themselves to watch Marche-à-Terre. Yet the Chouan did not exhibit the faintest sign of emotion: though he saw himself thus scanned by men as formidable by their wits as by their bodily strength. The curiosity of the two officers, new to this kind of warfare, was vividly excited by the beginning of an affair which seemed likely to have something of the interest of a romance: and they were on the point of making jokes on the situation. But at the first word of the kind that escaped them, Hulot said with a grave look, "God's thunder, citizens! don't light your pipes on the powder barrel. Cheerfulness out of season is as bad as water poured into a sieve. Gérard," continued he, leaning towards his adjutant's ear, "come quietly close to this brigand, and be ready at his first suspicious movement to run him through the body. For my part, I will take measures to keep up the conversation, if our unknown friends are good enough to begin it."

Gérard bowed slightly to intimate obedience, and then began to observe the chief objects of the valley, which has been sufficiently described. He seemed to wish to examine them more attentively, and kept walking up and down and without ostensible object: but you may be sure that the landscape was the last thing he looked at. For his part, Marche-à-Terre gave not a sign of consciousness that the officer's movements threatened him: from the way in which he played with his whip-lash you might have thought that he was fishing in the ditch by the roadside.

While Gérard thus manœuvred to gain a position in front of the Chouan, the commandant whispered to Merle: "Take a sergeant with ten picked men and post them yourself above us at the spot on the hill-top where the road

widens out level, and where you can see a good long stretch of the way to Ernée; choose a place where there are no trees at the roadside, and where the sergeant can overlook the open country. Let Clef-des-Cœurs be the man: he has his wits about him. It is no laughing matter: I would not give a penny for our skins if we do not take all the advantage we can get."

While Captain Merle executed this order with a promptitude of which he well knew the importance, the commandant shook his right hand to enjoin deep silence on the soldiers who stood round him, and who were talking at ease. Another gesture bade them get once more under arms. As soon as quiet prevailed, he directed his eyes first to one side of the road and then to the other, listening with anxious attention, as if he hoped to catch some stifled noise, some clatter of weapons, or some footfalls preliminary to the expected trouble. His black and piercing eye seemed to probe the furthest recesses of the woods; but as no symptoms met him there he examined the gravel of the road after the fashion of savages, trying to discover some traces of the invisible enemy whose audacity was well known to him. In despair at seeing nothing to justify his fears he advanced to the edge of the roadway, and after carefully climbing its slight risings, paced their tops slowly; but then he remembered how indispensable his experience was to the safety of his troops, and descended. His countenance darkened: for the chiefs of those days always regretted that they were not able to keep the most dangerous tasks for themselves. The other officers and the privates, noticing the absorption of a leader whose disposition they loved, and whose bravery they knew, perceived that his extreme care betokened some danger: but as they were not in a position to appreciate its gravity, they remained motionless, and, by a sort of instinct, even held their breaths.

Like dogs who would fain make out the drift of the orders—to them incomprehensible—of a cunning hunter, but who obey him implicitly, the soldiers gazed by turns at the valley of the Couësnon, at the woods by the roadside, and at the stern face of their commander, trying to read their

impending fate in each. Glance met glance, and even more than one smile ran from lip to lip.

As Hulot bent his brows Beau-Pied, a young sergeant who passed for the wit of the company, said in a half whisper: "Where the devil have we put our foot in it that an old soldier like Hulot makes such muddy faces at us? he looks like a court-martial!"

But Hulot bent a stern glance on Beau-Pied, and the due "silence in the ranks" once more prevailed. In the midst of this solemn hush the laggard steps of the conscripts, under whose feet the gravel gave a dull crunch, distracted vaguely, with its regular pulse, the general anxiety. Only those can comprehend such an indefinite feeling, who, in the grip of some cruel expectation, have during the stilly night felt the heavy beatings of their own hearts quicken at some sound whose monotonous recurrence seems to distil terror drop by drop. But the commandant once more took his place in the midst of the troops, and began to ask himself "Can I have been deceived?" He was beginning to look, with gathering anger flashing from his eyes, on the calm and stolid figure of Marche-à-Terre, when a touch of savage irony which he seemed to detect in the dull eyes of the Chouan urged him not to discontinue his precautions. At the same moment Captain Merle, after carrying out Hulot's orders, came up to rejoin him. The silent actors in this scene, so like a thousand other scenes which made this war exceptionally dramatic, waited impatiently for new incidents, eager to see light thrown on the dark side of their military situation by the manœuvres which might follow.

"We did well, captain," said the commandant, "to set the few patriots among these requisitionaries at the tail of the detachment. Take a dozen more stout fellows, put Sub-lieutenant Lebrun at their head, and lead them at quick march to the rear. They are to support the patriots who are there, and to bustle on the whole flock of geese briskly, so as to bring it up at the double to the height which their comrades already occupy. I will wait for you."

The captain disappeared in the midst of his men, and the commandant, looking by turns at four brave soldiers whose activity and intelligence were known to him, beckoned

silently to them with a friendly gesture of the fingers, signifying "Come": and they came.

"You served with me under Hoche," he said, "when we brought those brigands who called themselves the 'King's Huntsmen' to reason: and you know how they used to hide themselves in order to pot the Blues!"

At this encomium on their experience the four soldiers nodded with a significant grin, exhibiting countenances full of soldierly heroism, but whose careless indifference announced that, since the struggle had begun between France and Europe, they had thought of nothing beyond their knapsacks behind them and their bayonets in front. Their lips were contracted as with tight-drawn purse-strings, and their watchful and curious eyes gazed at their leader.

"Well," continued Hulot, who possessed in perfection the art of speaking the soldier's highly-coloured language, "old hands such as we must not let ourselves be caught by Chouans: and there are Chouans about here, or my name is not Hulot. You four must beat the two sides of the road in front. The detachment will go slowly. Keep up well with it. Try not to lose the number of your mess,[1] and do your scouting there smartly."

Then he pointed out to them the most dangerous heights on the way. They all, by way of thanks, carried the backs of their hands to the old three-cornered hats, whose tall brims, rain-beaten and limp with age, slouched on the crown: and one of them, Larose, a corporal, and well known to Hulot, made his musket ring, and said, "We will play them a tune on the rifle, commandant!"

They set off, two to the right, the others to the left: and the company saw them disappear on both sides with no slight anxiety. This feeling was shared by the comman-

[1] This is a naval rather than a military metaphor: but I do not know how Thomas Atkins would express *descendre la garde.*—*Translator's Note.*

dant, who had little doubt that he was sending them to certain death. He could hardly help shuddering when the tops of their hats were no longer visible, while both officers and men heard the dwindling sound of their steps on the dry leaves with a feeling all the acuter that it was carefully veiled. For in war there are situations when the risk of four men's lives causes more alarm than the thousands of slain at a battle of Jemmapes. Soldiers' faces have such various and such rapidly fleeting expressions, that those who would sketch them are forced to appeal to memories of soldiers, and to leave peaceable folk to study for themselves their dramatic countenances, for storms so rich in details as these could not be described without intolerable tediousness.

Just as the last flash of the four bayonets disappeared Captain Merle returned, having accomplished the commandant's orders with the speed of lightning. Hulot, with a few words of command, set the rest of his troops in fighting order in the middle of the road. Then he bade them occupy the summit of the Pilgrim, where his scanty vanguard was posted: but he himself marched last and backwards, so as to note the slightest change at any point of the scene which nature had made so beautiful and man so full of fear. He had reached the spot where Gérard was mounting guard on Marche-à-Terre, when the Chouan, who had followed with an apparently careless eye all the commandant's motions, and who was at the moment observing with unexpected keenness the two soldiers who were busy in the woods at the right, whistled twice or thrice in such a manner as to imitate the clear and piercing note of the screech-owl. Now the three famous smugglers mentioned above used in the same way to employ at night certain variations on this hoot in order to interchange intelligence of ambuscades, of threatening dangers, and of every fact of importance to them. It was from this that the surname

Chuin, the local word for the owl, was given to them, and the term, slightly corrupted, served in the first war to designate those who followed the ways and obeyed the signals of the brothers. When he heard this suspicious whistle, the commandant halted, and looked narrowly at Marche-à-Terre. He pretended to be deceived by the sheepish air of the Chouan, on purpose to keep him near to himself, as a barometer to indicate the movements of the enemy. And therefore he checked the hand of Gérard, who was about to despatch him. Then he posted two soldiers a couple of paces from the spy, and in loud clear tones bade them shoot him at the first signal that he gave. Yet Marche-à-Terre, in spite of his imminent danger, did not show any emotion, and the commandant, who was still observing him, noting his insensibility, said to Gérard: "The goose does not know his business. 'Tis never easy to read a Chouan's face, but this fellow has betrayed himself by wishing to show his pluck. Look you, Gérard, if he had pretended to be afraid, I should have taken him for a mere fool. There would have been a pair of us, and I should have been at my wit's end. Now it is certain that we shall be attacked. But they may come. I am ready."

Having said these words in a low voice, and with a triumphant air, the old soldier rubbed his hands and glanced slyly at Marche-à-Terre. Then he crossed his arms on his breast, remained in the middle of the road between his two favourite officers, and waited for the event of his dispositions. Tranquil at last as to the result of the fight, he surveyed his soldiers with a calm countenance.

"There will be a row in a minute," whispered Beau-Pied, "the commandant is rubbing his hands."

Such a critical situation as that in which Commandant Hulot and his detachment were placed, is one of those

where life is so literally at stake that men of energy make it a point of honour to show coolness and presence of mind. At such moments manhood is put to a last proof. So the commandant, knowing more of the danger than his officers, plumed himself all the more on appearing the most tranquil. By turns inspecting Marche-à-Terre, the road, and the woods, he awaited, not without anxiety, the sound of a volley from the Chouans, who, he doubted not, were lurking like forest-demons around him. His face was impassive. When all the soldiers' eyes were fixed on his, he slightly wrinkled his brown cheeks pitted with small-pox, drew up the right side of his lip, and winked hard, producing a grimace which his men regularly understood to be a smile. Then he clapped Gérard's shoulder and said, "Now that we are quiet, what were you going to say to me?"

"What new crisis is upon us, commandant?"

"The thing is not new," answered he, in a low tone. "The whole of Europe is against us, and this time the cards are with them. While our Directors are squabbling among themselves like horses without oats in a stable, and while their whole administration is going to pieces, they leave the army without supplies. In Italy we are simply lost! Yes, my friends, we have evacuated Mantua in consequence of losses on the Trebia, and Joubert has just lost a battle at Novi. I only hope Massena may be able to keep the passes in Switzerland against Suwarrow. We have been driven in on the Rhine, and the Directory has sent Moreau there. Will the fellow be able to hold the frontier? Perhaps; but sooner or later the coalition must crush us, and the only general who could save us is,—the devil knows where,—down in Egypt. Besides, how could he get back? England is mistress of the seas."

"I do not care so much about Bonaparte's absence, commandant," said the young adjutant Gérard, in whom a

careful education had developed a naturally strong understanding. "Do you mean that the Revolution will be arrested in its course? Ah no! we are not only charged with the duty of defending the frontiers of France, we have a double mission. Are we not bound as well to keep alive the

genius of our country, the noble principles of liberty and independence, the spirit of human reason which our Assemblies have aroused, and which must advance from time to time? France is as a traveller commissioned to carry a torch; she holds it in one hand, and defends herself with the other. But if your news is true, never during ten years have more folk, anxious to blow the torch out, thronged around us. Our faith and our country both must be near perishing."

"Alas! 'tis true," sighed Commandant Hulot, "our puppets of Directors have taken good care to quarrel with all the men who could steer the ship of state. Bernadotte, Carnot, all, even citizen Talleyrand, have left us. There is but a single good patriot left—friend Fouché, who keeps things together by means of the police. That is a man for you! It was he who warned me in time of this rising, and what is more, I am sure we are caught in a trap of some sort."

"Oh!" said Gérard, "if the army has not some finger in the government, these attorney fellows will put us in a worse case than before the Revolution. How can such weasels know how to command?"

"I am always in fear," said Hulot, "of hearing that they are parleying with the Bourbons. God's thunder! if they came to terms, we should be in a pickle here!"

"No, no, commandant, it will not come to *that*," said Gérard, "the army, as you say, will make itself heard, and unless it speaks according to Pichegru's dictionary, there is good hope that we shall not have worked and fought ourselves to death for ten years, only to have planted the flax ourselves, and let others spin it."

"Why, yes!" said the commandant, "we have not changed our coats without its costing us something."

"Well then," said Captain Merle, "let us play the part of good patriots still here, and try to stop communications between our Chouans and La Vendée. For if they join, and England lends a hand, why then I will not answer for the cap of the Republic, one and indivisible."

At this point the owl's hoot, which sounded afar off, interrupted the conversation. The commandant, more anxious, scanned Marche-à-Terre anew, but his impassive countenance gave hardly even a sign of life. The conscripts, brought up by an officer, stood huddled like a herd

of cattle in the middle of the road, some thirty paces from the company drawn up in order of battle. Last of all, ten paces further, were the soldiers and patriots under the orders of Lieutenant Lebrun. The commandant threw a glance over his array, resting it finally on the picket which he had posted in front. Satisfied with his dispositions, he was just turning round to give the word "March," when he caught sight of the tricolour cockades of the two soldiers who were coming back after searching the woods to the left. Seeing that the scouts on the right had not returned, he thought of waiting for them.

"Perhaps the bomb is going to burst there," he said to the two officers, pointing to the wood where his forlorn hope seemed to be buried.

While the two scouts made a kind of report to him, Hulot took his eyes off Marche-à-Terre. The Chouan thereupon set to whistling sharply in such a fashion as to send the sound to a prodigious distance: and then, before either of his watchers had been able even to take aim at him, he dealt them blows with his whip which stretched them on the foot-path. At the same moment cries, or rather savage howls, surprised the Republicans: a heavy volley coming from the wood at the top of the slope where the Chouan had seated himself, laid seven or eight soldiers low: while Marche-à-Terre, at whom half-a-dozen useless shots were fired, disappeared in the thicket after climbing the slope like a wild cat. As he did so his *sabots* dropped in the ditch and they could easily see on his feet the stout hobnailed shoes which were usually worn by the "King's Huntsmen." No sooner had the Chouans given tongue than the whole of the conscripts dashed into the wood to the right, like flocks of birds which take to wing on the approach of a traveller.

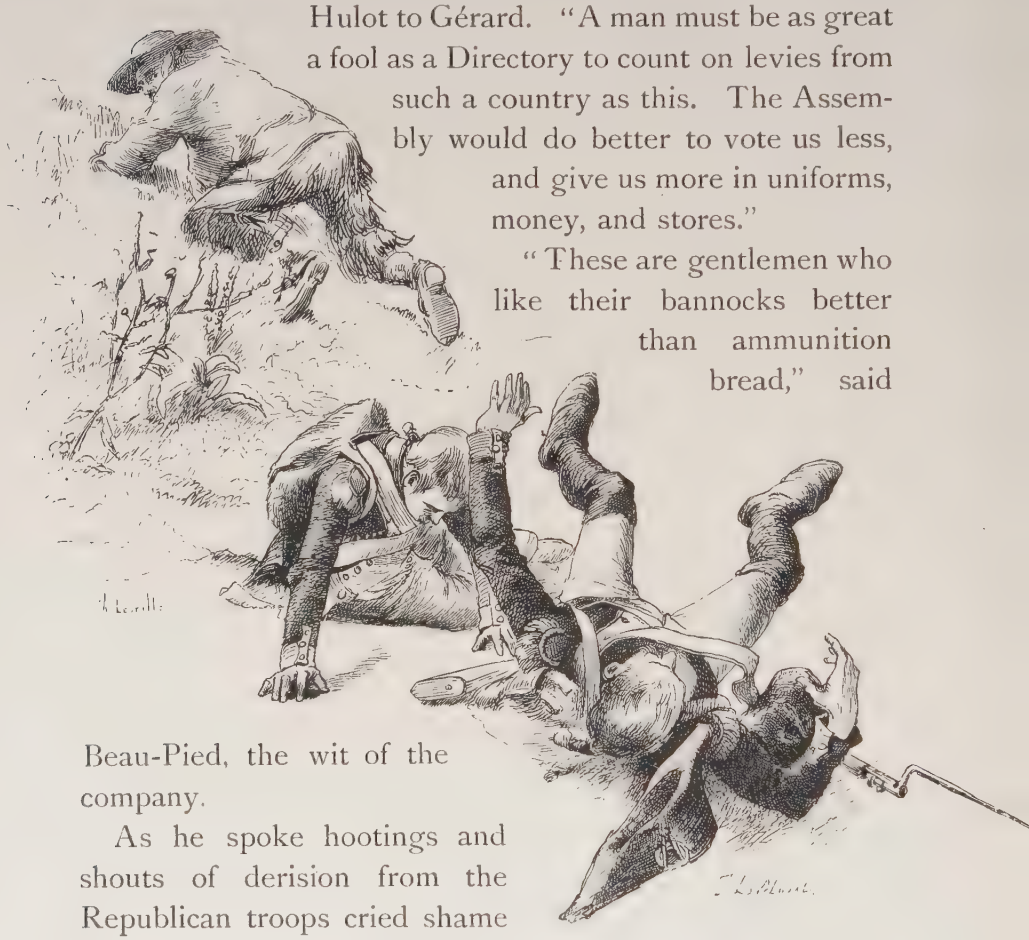
"Fire on the rascals!" cried the commandant.

The company fired, but the conscripts had had the address

to put themselves in safety by setting each man his back to a tree, and before the muskets could be reloaded they had vanished.

"Now talk of recruiting departmental legions, eh?" said Hulot to Gérard. "A man must be as great a fool as a Directory to count on levies from such a country as this. The Assembly would do better to vote us less, and give us more in uniforms, money, and stores."

"These are gentlemen who like their bannocks better than ammunition bread," said Beau-Pied, the wit of the company.



As he spoke hootings and shouts of derision from the Republican troops cried shame on the deserters: but silence fell again at once, as the soldiers saw, climbing painfully down the slope, the two light infantry men whom the commandant had sent to beat the wood to the right. The less severely wounded of the two was supporting his comrade, whose blood poured on the ground, and the two poor fellows had reached the middle of the descent when Marche-à-Terre showed his

hideous face, and took such good aim at the two Blues that he hit them both with the same shot, and they dropped heavily into the ditch. His great head had no sooner appeared than thirty barrels were raised, but like a figure in a phantasmagoria he had already disappeared behind the terrible broom tufts. These incidents, which take so long in the telling, passed in a moment, and then, again in a moment, the patriots and the soldiers of the rear-guard effected a junction with the rest of the escort.

"Forward!" cried Hulot.

The company made its way quickly to the lofty and bare spot where the picket had been posted. There the commandant once more set the company in battle array; but he could see no further sign of hostility on the Chouans' part, and thought that the deliverance of the conscripts had been the only object of the ambuscade.

"I can tell by their shouts," said he to his two friends, "that there are not many of them. Let us quicken up. Perhaps we can gain Ernée without having them upon us."

The words were heard by a patriot conscript, who left the ranks and presented himself to Hulot.

"General," said he, "I have served in this war before as a counter-Chouan. May a man say a word to you?"

"'Tis a lawyer: these fellows always think themselves in court," whispered the commandant into Merle's ear. "Well, make your speech," said he to the young man of Fougères.

"Commandant, the Chouans have no doubt brought arms for the new recruits they have just gained. Now, if we budge, they will wait for us at every corner of the wood and kill us to the last man before we reach Ernée. We must make a speech, as you say, but it must be with cartridges. During the skirmish, which will last longer

than you think, one of my comrades will go and fetch the National Guard and the Free Companies from Fougères. Though we are only conscripts you shall see then whether we are kites and crows at fighting."

"You think there are many of the Chouans then?"

"Look for yourself, citizen commandant."

He took Hulot to a spot on the plateau where the road-gravel had been disturbed as if with a rake, and then, after drawing his attention to this, he led him some way in front to a by-path where they saw traces of the passage of no small number of men, for the leaves were trodden right into the beaten soil.

"These are the *Gars* of Vitré," said the man of Fougères. "They have started to join the men of Lower Normandy."

"What is your name, citizen?" said Hulot.

"Gudin, commandant."

"Well, Gudin, I make you corporal of your townsfolk. You seem to be a fellow who can be depended on. Choose for yourself one of your comrades to send to Fougères. And you yourself stay by me. First, go with your requisitionaries and pick up the knapsacks, the guns, and the uniforms of our poor comrades whom the brigands have knocked over. You shall not stay here to stand gunshot without returning it."

So the bold men of Fougères went to strip the dead, and the whole company protected them by pouring a steady fire into the wood, so that the task of stripping was successfully performed without the loss of a single man.

"These Bretons," said Hulot to Gérard, "will make famous infantry if they can ever make up their minds to the pannikin."[1]

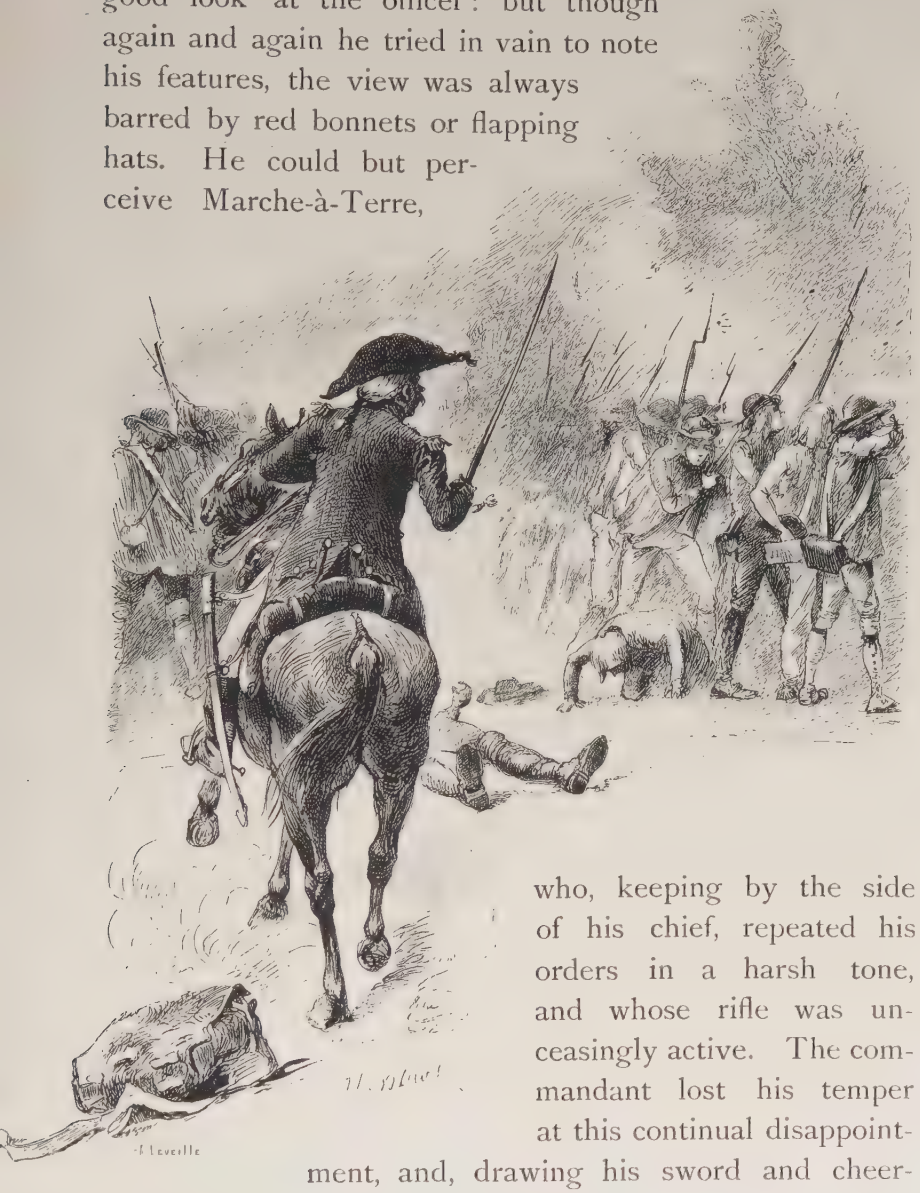
[1] *Gamelle*, the joint soup-plate or bowl in which the rations of several French soldiers were served, and which has something of the traditional sacredness of the Janissary soup-kettle.—*Translator's Note.*

Gudin's messenger started at a run by a winding path in the wood to the left. The soldiers, busy in seeing to their weapons, made ready for the fight: and the commandant, after looking them over smilingly, took his station a few steps in front, with his two favourite officers, and waited stubbornly for the Chouans to attack. There was again silence for a while, but it did not last long. Three hundred Chouans, dressed in a similar fashion to the requisitionaries, debouched from the woods to the right, and occupied, after a disorderly fashion, and uttering shouts which were true wild-beast howls, the breadth of the road in front of the thin line of Blues. The commandant drew up his men in two equal divisions, each ten men abreast, placing between the two his dozen requisitionaries hastily equipped and under his own immediate command. The little army was guarded on the wings by two detachments, each twenty-five men strong, who operated on the two sides of the road under Gérard and Merle, and whose business it was to take the Chouans in flank, and prevent them from practising the manœuvre called in the country dialect *s'égailler*, that is to say, scattering themselves about the country, and each man taking up his own position so as best to shoot at the Blues without exposing himself. In which way of fighting the Republican troops were at their wits' end where to have their enemies.

These dispositions, which the commandant ordered with the promptitude suited to the circumstances, inspired the soldiers with the same confidence that he himself felt, and the whole body silently marched on the Chouans. At the end of a few minutes, the interval required to cover the space between the two forces, a volley at point-blank laid many low on both sides, but at the same moment the Republican wings, against which the Chouans had made no counter-movement, came up on the flank, and by a close and lively fire spread death and disorder amid the enemy to an

extent which almost equalized the number of the two bodies. But there was in the character of the Chouans a stubborn courage which would stand any trial: they budged not a step, their losses did not make them waver, they closed up their broken ranks and strove to surround the dark and steady handful of Blues, which occupied so little space that it looked like a queen bee in the midst of a swarm. Then began one of those appalling engagements in which the sound of gunshot, scarcely heard at all, is replaced by the clatter of a struggle with the cold steel, in which men fight hand to hand, and in which with equal courage the victory is decided simply by numbers. The Chouans would have carried the day at once if the wings under Merle and Gérard had not succeeded in raking their rear with more than one volley. The Blues who composed these wings ought to have held their position and continued to mark down their formidable adversaries: but, heated by the sight of the dangers which the brave detachment ran, completely surrounded as it was by the King's Huntsmen, they flung themselves madly on the road, bayonet in hand, and for a moment redressed the balance. Both sides then gave themselves up to the furious zeal, kindled by a wild and savage party spirit, which made this war unique. Each man, heedful of his own danger, kept absolute silence; and the whole scene had the grisly coolness of death itself. Across the silence, broken only by the clash of arms and the crunching of the gravel, there came nothing else but the dull heavy groans of those who fell to earth, dying or wounded to the death. In the midst of the Republicans the requisitionaries defended the commandant, who was busied in giving counsel and command in all directions, so stoutly that more than once the regulars cried out, "Well done, recruits!" But Hulot, cool and watchful of everything, soon distinguished among the Chouans a man who, surrounded like

himself by a few picked followers, seemed to be their leader. He thought it imperative that he should take a good look at the officer: but though again and again he tried in vain to note his features, the view was always barred by red bonnets or flapping hats. He could but perceive Marche-à-Terre,



who, keeping by the side of his chief, repeated his orders in a harsh tone, and whose rifle was unceasingly active. The commandant lost his temper at this continual disappointment, and, drawing his sword and cheering on the requisitionaries, charged the thickest of the Chouans so furiously that he broke through them, and was

able to catch a glimpse of the chief, whose face was unluckily quite hidden by a huge flapped hat bearing the white cockade. But the stranger, startled by the boldness of the attack, stepped backwards, throwing up his hat sharply, and Hulot had the opportunity of taking brief stock of him. The young leader, whom Hulot could not judge to be more than five-and-twenty, wore a green cloth shooting coat, and pistols were thrust in his white sash : his stout shoes were hobnailed like those of the Chouans, while sporting gaiters rising to his knees and joining breeches of very coarse duck, completed a costume which revealed a shape of moderate height, but slender and well proportioned. Enraged at seeing the Blues so near him, he slouched his hat and made at them : but he was immediately surrounded by Marche-à-Terre and some other Chouans alarmed for his safety. Yet Hulot thought he could see in the intervals left by the heads of those who thronged round the young man a broad red ribbon on a half-opened waistcoat. The commandant's eyes were attracted for a moment by this Royalist decoration, then entirely forgotten, but shifted suddenly to the face which he lost from sight almost as soon, being driven by the course of the fight to attend to the safety and the movements of his little force. He thus saw but for a moment a pair of sparkling eyes whose colour he did not mark, fair hair, and features finely cut enough, but sunburnt. He was, however, particularly struck by the gleam of a bare neck whose whiteness was enhanced by a black cravat, loose, and carelessly tied. The fiery and spirited gestures of the young chief were soldierly enough, after the fashion of those who like to see a certain conventional romance in a fight. His hand, carefully gloved, flourished a sword-blade that flashed in the sun. His bearing displayed at once elegance and strength : and his somewhat deliberate excitement, set off as it was by the charms of youth and by graceful manners,

made the emigrant leader a pleasing type of the French noblesse, and a sharp contrast with Hulot, who, at a pace or two from him, personified in his turn the vigorous Republic for which the old soldier fought, and whose stern face and blue uniform, faced with shabby red, the epaulets tarnished and hanging back over his shoulders, depicted not ill his character and his hardships.

The young man's air and his not ungraceful affectation did not escape Hulot, who shouted as he tried to get at him: "Come, you opera dancer there! come along and be thrashed!"

The royal chief, annoyed at his momentary check, rushed forward desperately: and no sooner had his men seen him thus risk himself, than they all flung themselves on the Blues.

But suddenly a clear sweet voice made itself heard above the battle, "'Twas here that sainted Lescure died, will you not avenge him?" And at these words of enchantment the exertions of the Chouans became so terrible, that the Republican soldiers had the greatest trouble in holding their ground without breaking ranks.

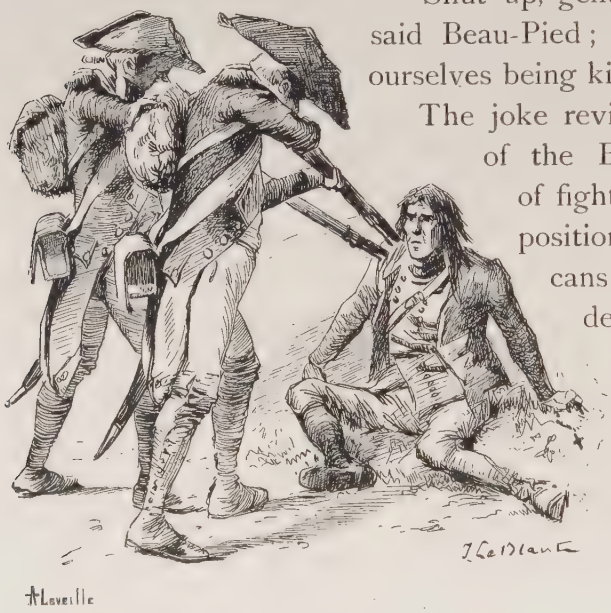
"Had he not been a youngster," said Hulot to himself, as he retreated step by step, "we should not have been attacked. Whoever heard of Chouans fighting a pitched battle? but so much the better. We shall not be killed like dogs along the roadside." Then raising his voice that it might up-echo along the woods, "Wake up! children," he cried, "shall we let ourselves be bothered by brigands?"

The term by which we have replaced the word which the valiant commandant actually used is but a weak equivalent: but old hands will know how to restore the true phrase which certainly has a more soldierly flavour.

"Gérard! Merle!" continued the commandant, "draw off your men! form them in column! fall back! fire on the dogs: and let us have done with them!"

But Hulot's order was not easy to execute, for, as he heard his adversary's voice, the young chief cried: "By St. Anne of Auray! hold them fast! scatter yourselves, my *Gars!*"

And when the two wings commanded by Merle and Gérard left the main battle, each handful was followed by a determined band of Chouans much superior in numbers, and the stout old goatskins surrounded the regulars on all sides, shouting anew their sinister and bestial howls.



"Shut up, gentlemen, please," said Beau-Pied; "we can't hear ourselves being killed."

The joke revived the spirits of the Blues. Instead of fighting in a single position, the Republicans continued their defence at three different spots on the plateau of the Pilgrim, and all its valleys, lately so peaceful, re-echoed with the fusillade. Victory might have remained undecided for hours, till the fight ceased for want of fighters, for Blues and Chouans fought with equal bravery and with rage constantly increasing on both sides, when the faint beat of a drum was heard afar off, and it was clear from the direction of the sound that the force which it heralded was crossing the valley of the Couësnon.

"'Tis the National Guard of Fougères!" cried Gudin, loudly; "Vannier must have met them."

At this cry, which reached the ears of the young Chouan

chief and his fierce aide-de-camp, the Royalists made a backward movement, but it was promptly checked by a roar as of a wild beast from Marche-à-Terre. After a word of command or two given by the leader in a low voice and transmitted in Breton by Marche-à-Terre to the Chouans, they arranged their retreat with a skill which astonished the Republicans and even the commandant. At the first word those in best condition fell into line and showed a stout front, behind which the wounded men and the rest retired to load. Then all at once, with the same agility of which Marche-à-Terre had before set the example, the wounded scaled the height which bounded the road on the right, and were followed by half the remaining Chouans, who, also climbing it smartly, manned the summit so as to show the Blues nothing but their bold heads. Once there, they took the trees for breastwork, and levelled their guns at the remnant of the escort, who, on Hulot's repeated orders, had dressed their ranks quickly so as to show on the road itself a front not less than that of the Chouans still occupying it. These latter fell back slowly and fought every inch of ground, shifting so as to put themselves under their comrades' fire. As soon as they had reached the ditch, they in their turn escaladed the slope whose top their fellows held, and joined them after suffering without flinching the fire of the Republicans, who were lucky enough to fill the ditch with dead, though the men on the top of the scarp replied with a volley quite as deadly. At this moment the Fougères National Guard came up at a run to the battle-field, and its arrival finished the business. The National Guards and some excited regulars were already crossing the footpath to plunge into the woods, when the commandant's martial voice cried to them: "Do you want to have your throats cut in there?"

So they rejoined the Republican force which had held the

field, but not without heavy losses. All the old hats were stuck on the bayonet points, the guns were thrust aloft, and the soldiers cried with one voice and twice over, "Long live the Republic!" Even the wounded sitting on the roadsides shared the enthusiasm, and Hulot squeezed Gérard's hand, saying: "Eh! these are something like fellows!"

Merle was ordered to bury the dead in a ravine by the roadside; while other soldiers busied themselves with the wounded. Carts and horses were requisitioned from the farms round, and the disabled comrades were softly bedded in them on the strippings of the dead. But before departing, the Fougères National Guard handed over to Hulot a dangerously wounded Chouan. They had taken him prisoner at the foot of the steep slope by which his comrades had escaped, and on which he had slipped, betrayed by his flagging strength.

"Thanks for your prompt action, citizens," said the commandant. "God's thunder! but for you we should have had a bad time of it. Take care of yourselves: the war has begun. Farewell, my brave fellows." Then Hulot turned to the prisoner: "What is your general's name?" asked he.

"The Gars."

"Who is that, Marche-à-Terre?"

"No! the Gars."

"Where did the Gars come from?"

At this question the King's Huntsman, his rough fierce face stricken with pain, kept silence, told his beads and began to say prayers.

"Of course the Gars is the young *ci-devant* with the black cravat; he was sent by the tyrant and his allies Pitt and Cobourg?"

But at these words the Chouan, less well informed than the commandant, raised his head proudly: "He was sent by God and the King!"

He said the words with an energy which exhausted his small remaining strength. The commandant saw that it was almost impossible to extract intelligence from a dying man, whose whole bearing showed his blind fanaticism, and turned his head aside with a frown. Two soldiers, friends of those whom Marche-à-Terre had so brutally despatched with his whip on the side of the road (for indeed they lay dead there) stepped back a little, took aim at the Chouan, whose steady eyes fell not before the levelled barrels, fired point-blank at him, and he fell. But when they drew near to strip the corpse he mustered strength to cry once more and loudly, "Long live the King!"

"Oh, yes, sly dog!" said Clef-des-Cœurs, "go and eat your bannocks at your good Virgin's table. To think of his shouting 'Long live the tyrant' in our faces when we thought him done for!"

"Here, commandant," said Beau-Pied, "here are the brigand's papers."

"Hullo!" cried Clef-des-Cœurs again, "do come and look at this soldier of God with his stomach painted!"

Hulot and some of the men crowded round the Chouan's body, now quite naked, and perceived on his breast a kind of bluish tattoo-mark representing a burning heart, the mark of initiation of the Brotherhood of the *Sacred Heart*. Below the design Hulot could decipher the words "Marie Lambrequin," no doubt the Chouan's name. "You see that, Clef-des-Cœurs?" said Beau-Pied. "Well, you may guess for a month of Sundays before you find out the use of this accoutrement."

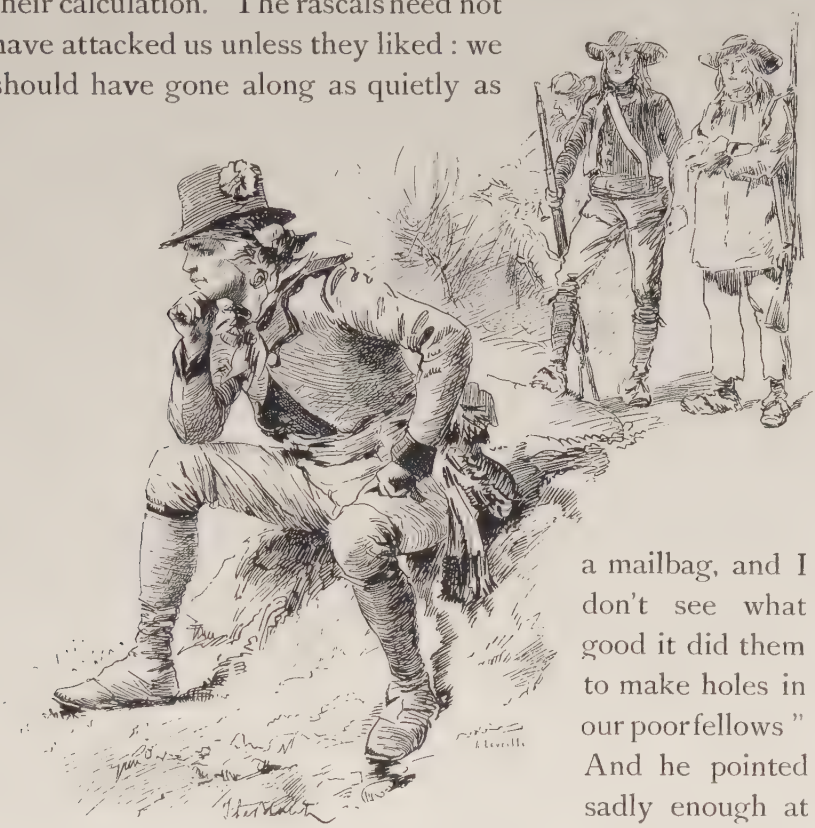
"What do I know about the Pope's uniforms?" replied Clef-des-Cœurs.

"Wretched pad-the-hoof that you are!" retorted Beau-Pied; "will you never learn? don't you see that they have promised the fellow resurrection, and that he has painted his belly that he may know himself again?"

At this sally, which had a certain ground of fact, Hulot himself could not help joining in the general laughter. By this time Merle had finished burying the dead, and the wounded had been, as best could be done, packed in two waggons by their comrades. The rest of the soldiers, forming without orders a double file on each side of the improvised ambulances, made their way down the side of the hill which faces Maine, and from which is seen the valley of the Pilgrim, a rival to that of the Couësnon in beauty. Hulot, with his two friends Merle and Gérard, followed his soldiers at an easy pace, hoping to gain Ernée, where his wounded could be looked after without further mishap. The fight, though almost forgotten among the mightier events which were then beginning in France, took its name from the place where it had occurred, and attracted some attention, if not elsewhere, in the West, whose inhabitants, noting with care this new outbreak of hostilities, observed a change in the way in which the Chouans opened the new war. Formerly they would never have thought of attacking detachments of such strength. Hulot conjectured that the young Royalist he had seen must be the *Gars*, the new general sent to France by the Royal Family, who, after the fashion usual with the Royalist chiefs, concealed his style and title under one of the nicknames called *noms de guerre*. The fact made the commandant not less thoughtful after his dearly-won victory, than at the moment when he suspected the ambuscade. He kept turning back to look at the summit of the Pilgrim which he was leaving behind, and whence there still came at intervals the muffled sound of the drums of the National Guard who were descending the valley of the Couësnon just as the Blues were descending that of the Pilgrim.

"Can either of you," he said suddenly to his two friends, "guess the Chouans' motive in attacking us? They are

business-like folk in dealing with gunshots, and I cannot see what they had to gain in this particular transaction. They must have lost at least a hundred men : and we," he added, hitching his right cheek and winking by way of a smile, "have not lost sixty. God's thunder! I do not see their calculation. The rascals need not have attacked us unless they liked : we should have gone along as quietly as



a mailbag, and I don't see what good it did them to make holes in our poor fellows" And he pointed sadly enough at the two waggon loads of wounded. "Of course," he added, "it may have been mere politeness—a kind of 'good day to you!'"

"But, commandant, they carried off our hundred and fifty recruits," answered Merle.

"The conscripts might have hopped into the woods like frogs for all the trouble we should have taken to catch them," said Hulot, "especially after the first volley;" and

he repeated, "No! no! there is something behind." Then with yet another turn towards the hill, "There!" he cried, "look!"

Although the officers were now some way from the fatal plateau, they could easily distinguish Marche-à-Terre and some Chouans who had occupied it afresh.

"Quick march!" cried Hulot to his men, "stir your stumps, and wake up Shanks his mare! are your legs frozen? have they turned Pitt-and-Cobourg men?"

The little force began to move briskly at these words, and the commandant continued to the two officers, "As for this riddle, friends, which I can't make out, God grant the answer be not given in musket language at Ernée. I am much afraid of hearing that the communication with Mayenne has been cut again by the King's subjects."

But the problem which curled Commandant Hulot's moustache was at the same time causing quite as lively anxiety to the folk he had seen on the top of the Pilgrim. As soon as the drums of the National Guard died away, and the Blues were seen to have reached the bottom of the long descent, Marche-à-Terre sent the owl's cry cheerily out, and the Chouans reappeared, but in smaller numbers. No doubt, not a few were busy in looking to the wounded in the village of the Pilgrim, which lay on the face of the hill looking towards the Couësnon. Two or three leaders of the "King's Huntsmen" joined Marche-à-Terre, while, a pace or two away, the young nobleman, seated on a granite boulder, seemed plunged in various thoughts, excited by the difficulty which his enterprise already presented. Marche-à-Terre made a screen with his hand to shade his sight from the sun's glare, and gazed in a melancholy fashion at the road which the Republicans were following across the Pilgrim valley. His eyes, small, black, and piercing, seemed trying

to discover what was passing where the road began to climb again on the horizon of the valley.

"The Blues will intercept the mail!" said, savagely, one of the chiefs who was nearest Marche-à-Terre.

"In the name of Saint Anne of Auray," said another, "why did you make us fight? To save your own skin?"

Marche-à-Terre cast a venomous look at the speaker, and slapped the butt of his heavy rifle on the ground.

"Am I general?" he asked. Then after a pause, "If you had all fought as I did, not one of those Blues," and he pointed to the remnant of Hulot's detachment, "would have escaped, and the coach might have been here now."

"Do you think," said a third, "that they would have even thought of escorting or stopping it, if we had let them pass quietly? You wanted to save your cursed skin, which was in danger because you did not think the Blues were on the road. To save his bacon," continued the speaker, turning to the others, "he bled *us*, and we shall lose twenty thousand francs of good money as well!"

"Bacon yourself!" cried Marche-à-Terre, falling back, and levelling his rifle at his foe, "*you* do not hate the Blues: you only love the money. You shall die and be damned, you scoundrel! For you have not been to confession and communion this whole year!"

The insult turned the Chouan pale, and he took aim at Marche-à-Terre, a dull growl starting from his throat as he did so; but the young chief rushed between them, struck down their weapons with the barrel of his own rifle, and then asked for an explanation of the quarrel. For the conversation had been in Breton, with which he was not very familiar.

"My Lord Marquis," said Marche-à-Terre, when he had told him, "it is all the greater shame to find fault with me in that I left behind Pille-Miche, who will perhaps be able

to save the coach from the thieves' claws after all," and he pointed to the Blues, who, in the eyes of these faithful servants of the throne and altar, were all assassins of Louis XVI., and all robbers as well.

"What!" cried the young man, angrily, "you are lingering here to stop a coach like cowards, when you might have won the victory in the first fight where I have led you? How are we to triumph with such objects as these? Are the defenders of God and the King common marauders? By Saint Anne of Auray! it is the Republic and not the mail that we make war on. Henceforward, a man who is guilty of such shameful designs shall be deprived of absolution, and shall not share in the honours reserved for the King's brave servants."

A low growl rose from the midst of the band, and it was easy to see that the chief's new-born authority, always difficult to establish amongst such undisciplined gangs, was likely to be compromised. The young man, who had not missed this demonstration, was searching for some means of saving the credit of his position, when the silence was broken by a horse's trot, and all heads turned in the supposed direction of the new-comer. It was a young lady mounted sideways on a small Breton pony. She broke into a gallop, in order to reach the group of Chouans more quickly, when she saw the young man in their midst.

"What is the matter?" said she, looking from men to leader by turns.

"Can you believe it, madame?" said he, "they are lying in wait for the mail from Mayenne, with the intention of plundering it, when we have just fought a skirmish to deliver the *Gars* of Fougères, with heavy loss, but without having been able to destroy the Blues!"

"Well! what harm is there in that?" said the lady, whose woman's tact showed her at once the secret of the situation.

"You have lost men: we can always get plenty more. The mail brings money, and we can never have enough of that. We will bury our brave fellows who are dead, and who will go to heaven: and we will take the money to put into the pockets of the other brave fellows who are alive. What is the difficulty?"

Unanimous smiles showed the approval with which the Chouans heard this speech.

"Is there nothing in it that brings a blush to your cheek?" asked the young man, in a low tone. "Are you so short of money that you must take it on the highway?"

"I want it so much, marquis, that I would pledge my heart for it," said she, with a coquettish smile, "if it were not in pawn already. But where have you been that you think you can employ Chouans without giving them plunder now and then at the Blues' expense? don't you know the proverb 'thievish as an owl'? Remember what a Chouan is; besides,"

added she, louder, "is not the action just? have not the Blues taken all the Church's goods, and all our own?"

A second approving murmur, very different from the growl with which the Chouans had answered the marquis, greeted these words.

The young man's brow darkened, and, taking the lady aside, he said to her with the sprightly vexation of a well-bred man, "Are those persons coming to the Vivetière on the appointed day?"

"Yes," said she, "all of them; L'Intimé, Grand-Jacques, and perhaps Ferdinand."

"Then allow me to return thither, for I cannot sanction such brigandage as this by my presence. Yes, madame, I use the word brigandage. There is some nobility in being robbed: but——"

"Very well," said she, cutting him short, "I shall have your share, and I am much obliged to you for handing it over to me. The additional prize-money will suit me capitally. My mother has been so slow in sending me supplies, that I am nearly at my wits' end."

"Farewell!" cried the marquis, and he was on the point of vanishing. But the young lady followed him briskly. "Why will you not stay with me?" she said with the glance, half-imperious, half-caressing, by which women who have a hold over a man know how to express their will.

"Are you not going to rob a coach?"

"Rob!" replied she, "what a word! allow me to explain to you——"

"No: you shall explain nothing," he said, taking her hands and kissing them with the easy gallantry of a courtier. And then after a pause, "Listen: if I stay here while the mail is stopped, our fellows will kill me, for I shall——"

"No, you would not attempt to kill them," she said, quickly, "for they would bind you hand and foot with every respect

due to your rank: and when they had levied on the Republicans the contribution necessary for their equipment, their food, and their powder, they would once more yield you implicit obedience."

"And yet you would have me command here? If my life is necessary to fight for the cause, let me at least keep the honour of my authority safe. If I retire, I can ignore this base act. I will come back and join you."

And he made off swiftly, the young lady listening to his footfalls with obvious vexation. When the rustle of the dry leaves gradually died away, she remained in perplexity for a moment. Then she quickly made her way back to the Chouans, and allowed a brusque expression of contempt to escape her, saying to Marche-à-Terre, who helped her to dismount, "That young gentleman would like to carry on war against the Republic with all the regular forms. Ah well! he will change his mind in a day or two.——But how he has treated me!" she added to herself, after a pause. She then took her seat on the rock which had just before served the marquis as a chair, and silently awaited the arrival of the coach. She was not one of the least singular symptoms of the time, this young woman of noble birth, thrown by the strength of her passions into the struggle of monarchy against the spirit of the age, and driven by her sentiments into actions for which she was in a way irresponsible; as, indeed, were many others who were carried away by an excitement not seldom productive of great deeds. Like her, many other women played, in these disturbed times, the parts of heroines or of criminals. The Royalist cause had no more devoted, no more active servants than these ladies, but no virago of the party paid the penalty of excess of zeal, or suffered the pain of situations forbidden to the sex, more bitterly than this lady, as, sitting on her roadside boulder, she was forced to accord admiration to the noble disdain and

the inflexible integrity of the young chief. By degrees she fell into a deep reverie, and many sad memories made her long for the innocence of her early years, and regret that she had not fallen a victim to that Revolution whose victorious progress hands so weak as hers could not arrest.

The coach which had partly been the cause of the Chouan onslaught had left the little town of Ernée a few moments before the skirmish begun. Nothing better paints the condition of a country than the state of its social "plant," and, thus considered, this vehicle itself deserves honourable mention. Even the Revolution had not been able to abolish it: indeed, it runs at this very day.[1] When Turgot bought up the charter which a company had obtained under Louis XIV. for the exclusive right of serving passenger traffic all over the kingdom, and when he established the new enterprise of the so-called *turgotines*, the old coaches of Messieurs de Vousges, Chanteclaire, and the widow Lacombe were banished to the provinces. One of these wretched vehicles served the traffic between Mayenne and Fougères. Some featherheaded persons had baptized it antiphrastically a turgotine, either in imitation of Paris or in ridicule of an innovating minister. It was a ramshackle cabriolet on two very high wheels, and in its recesses two pretty stout persons would have had difficulty in ensconcing themselves. The scanty size of the frail trap forbidding heavy loads, and the inside of the coachbox being strictly reserved for the use of the mail, travellers, if they had any luggage, were obliged to keep it between their legs, already cramped in a tiny kind of boot shaped like a bellows. Its original colour and that of its wheels presented an insoluble riddle to travellers. Two leathern curtains, difficult to draw despite their length of service, were intended to protect the

[1] August, 1827. When Balzac, twenty-eight years old, and twenty-eight years after date, wrote *The Chouans* at Fougères itself.—*Translator's Note.*

sufferers against wind and rain: and the driver, perched on a box like those of the worst Parisian shandrydans, could not help joining in the travellers' conversation from his position between his two-legged and his four-legged victims. The whole equipage bore a fantastic likeness to a decrepit old man who has lived through any number of catarrhs and apoplexies, and from whom death seems yet to hold his hand. As it travelled it alternately groaned and creaked, lurching by turns forwards and backwards like a traveller heavy with sleep, as though it was pulling the other way to the rough action of two Breton ponies, who dragged it over a sufficiently rugged road. This relic of bygone ages contained three travellers who, after leaving Ernée, where they had changed horses, resumed a conversation with the driver which had been begun before the end of the last stage.

"What do you mean by saying that Chouans have shown themselves hereabouts?" said the driver. "The Ernée people have just told me that Commandant Hulot has not left Fougères yet."

"Oh, oh! friend," said the youngest traveller, "you risk nothing but your skin. If you had, like me, three hundred crowns on you, and if you were known for a good patriot, you would not take things so quietly."

"Anyhow, you don't keep your own secrets," said the driver, shaking his head.

"Count your sheep, and the wolf will eat them," said the second traveller; who, dressed in black, and apparently some forty years old, seemed to be a rector of the district. His chin was double, and his rosy complexion was a certain sign of his ecclesiastical status. But though fat and short, he showed no lack of agility whenever there was need to get down from the vehicle, or to get up again.

"Perhaps you are Chouans yourselves?" said the man with the three hundred crowns, whose ample goatskin-

covered breeches of good cloth, and a clean waistcoat, resembled the garments of some well-to-do farmer. "By Saint Robespierre's soul! You shall have a warm reception, I promise you!" And his grey eyes travelled from the priest to the driver, as he pointed to a pair of pistols in his belt.

"Bretons are not afraid of those things," said the rector, contemptuously. "Besides, do we look like people who have designs on your money?"

Every time the word "money" was mentioned, the driver became silent, and the rector was sufficiently wide-awake to suspect that the patriot had no crowns at all, and that their conductor was in charge of some.

"Are you well loaded to-day, Coupiau?" said the priest.

"Oh, Monsieur Gudin! I have nothing worth speaking of," answered the driver. But the Abbé Gudin, considering the countenances of the patriot and Coupiau, perceived that they were equally undisturbed at the answer.

"So much the better for you," retorted the patriot, "I can then take my own means to protect my own property in case of ill fortune."

But Coupiau rebelled at this cool announcement as to taking the law into the patriot's own hands, and answered roughly:

"I am master in my coach, and provided I drive you——"

"Are you a patriot, or are you a Chouan?" said his opponent, interrupting him sharply.

"I am neither one nor the other," replied Coupiau. "I am a postilion: and what is more, I am a Breton, therefore I fear neither the Blues nor the gentlemen."

"The gentlemen of the road, you mean," sneered the patriot.

"Nay, they only take back what has been taken from

them," said the rector, quickly: and the two travellers stared each other straight in the face, to speak vernacularly. But there was in the interior of the coach a third passenger, who, during this altercation, observed the deepest silence, neither the driver, nor the patriot, nor even Gudin paying the least attention to such a dummy. Indeed, he was one of those unsociable and impracticable travellers who journey like a calf, carried unresistingly with its legs tied to the nearest market, who begin by occupying at least their full legal room, and end by lolling asleep, without any false modesty, on their neighbours' shoulders. The patriot, Gudin, and the driver had therefore left the man to himself on the strength of his sleep, after perceiving that it was useless to talk to one whose stony countenance indicated a life passed in measuring out yards of linen, and an intelligence busied only in selling them as much as possible over cost price. A fat little man, curled up in his corner, he from time to time opened his china blue eyes and rested them on each speaker in turn during the discussion, with expressions of alarm, doubt, and mistrust. But he seemed only to be afraid of his fellow-travellers, and to care little for the Chouans; while when he looked at the driver it was as though one freemason looked at another. At this moment the firing on the Pilgrim began. Coupiau, with a startled air, pulled up his horses.

"Oh, oh!" said the priest, who seemed to know what he was talking about, "that means hard fighting, and plenty of men at it."

"Yes, Monsieur Gudin. But the puzzle is who will win?" said Coupiau; and this time all faces seemed equally anxious.

"Let us put up the coach," said the patriot, "at the inn over there, and hide it till we know the result of the battle."

This seemed such prudent advice that Coupiau yielded to

it, and the patriot helped the driver to stow the coach away from all eyes, behind a faggot stack. But the supposed priest seized an opportunity of saying to Coupiau :

" Has he really got money ? "

" Eh ! Monsieur Gudin, if what he has were in your Reverence's pockets, they would not be heavy."

The Republicans, in their hurry to gain Ernée, passed in front of the inn without halting ; and at the sound of their march Gudin and the innkeeper, urged by curiosity, came out of the yard gate to look at them. All of a sudden the plump priest ran to a soldier, who was somewhat behind.

" What, Gudin ! " he said, " are you going with the Blues, you obstinate boy ! what are you thinking of ? "

"Yes, uncle," answered the corporal, "I have sworn to defend France."

"But, miserable man, you are risking your soul!" said the uncle, trying to arouse in his nephew those religious sentiments which are so strong in a Breton's heart.

"Uncle, if the King had taken the head of the army himself, I don't say but——"

"Who is talking of the King, silly boy? will your Republic give you a fat living? It has upset everything. What career do you expect? Stay with us; we shall win sooner or later, and you shall have a counsellor's place in some parliament or other."

"A parliament!" cried Gudin, scornfully. "Good-bye, uncle."

"You shall not have three louis' worth from me," said the angry uncle; "I will disinherit you!"

"Thanks!" said the Republican, and they parted.

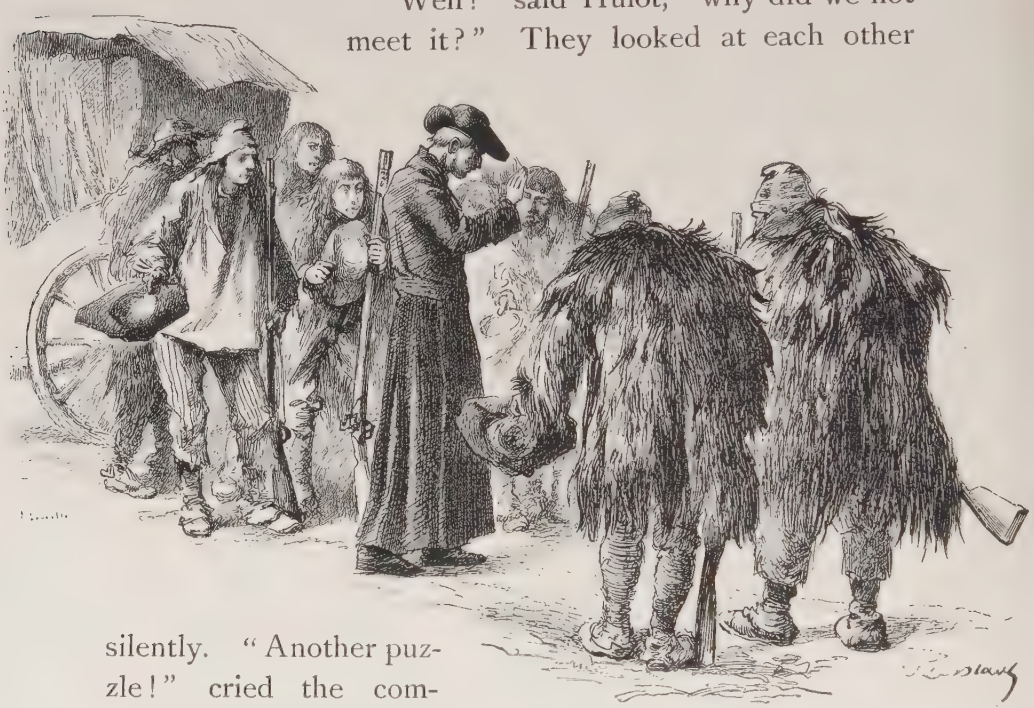
The fumes of some cider with which the patriot had regaled Coupiau while the little troop passed, had succeeded in muddling the driver's brains: but he started up joyfully when the innkeeper, after learning the result of the struggle, announced that the Blues had got the better. He set off once more with his coach, and the vehicle was not long in showing itself at the bottom of the Pilgrim valley, where, like a piece of wreckage floating after a storm, it could easily be seen from the high ground, both of Maine and Brittany.

Hulot, as he reached the top of a rising ground which the Blues were climbing, and whence the Pilgrim was still visible in the distance, turned back to see whether the Chouans were still there; and the sun flashing on their gun-barrels, showed them to him like dots of light. As he threw a last look over the valley which he was just leaving

for that of Ernée, he thought he could see Coupiau's coach and horses on the high road.

"Is not that the Mayenne coach?" he asked his two friends; and the officers, gazing at the old turgotine, recognized it easily.

"Well!" said Hulot, "why did we not meet it?" They looked at each other



silently. "Another puzzle!" cried the commandant, "but I think I begin to understand."

At that moment Marche-à-Terre, who also knew the turgotine well, signalled it to his comrades, and then shouts of general joy woke the strange young lady from her reverie. She came forward, and saw the vehicle bowling along with fatal swiftness from the other side of the Pilgrim. The unlucky turgotine soon reached the plateau, and the Chouans, who had hid themselves anew, pounced on their prey with greedy haste. The silent traveller slipped to the coach floor and shrunk out of sight, trying to look like a parcel of goods.

"Aha!" cried Coupiau from his box, pointing at his peasant passenger. "You have scented this patriot, have you? He has a bag full of gold."

But the Chouans greeted his words with a roar of laughter, and shouted "Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche!"

In the midst of the hilarity which Pille-Miche himself, as it were, echoed, Coupiau climbed shamefacedly from his box. But when the famous Cibot, nicknamed Pille-Miche, helped his neighbour to get down, a respectful murmur was raised. "'Tis Abbé Gudin," cried several, and at this honoured name every hat went off, the Chouans bent the knee before the priest and begged his blessing, which he gave them with solemnity.

"He would out-wit Saint Peter himself, and filch the keys of Paradise!" said the rector, clapping Pille-Miche on the shoulder. "But for him the Blues would have intercepted us."

But then, seeing the young lady, the Abbé Gudin went to talk to her a few paces apart. Marche-à-Terre, who had promptly opened the box of the cabriolet, discovered with savage glee a bag whose shape promised rouleaux of gold. He did not waste much time in making the division, and each Chouan received the part that fell to him with such exactitude, that the partition did not excite the least quarrel. Then he came forward to the young lady and the priest, offering them about six thousand francs.

"May I take this with a safe conscience, Monsieur Gudin?" said she, feeling in need of some approval to support her.

"Why, of course, madame! Did not the Church formerly approve the confiscation of the Protestants' goods? Much more should she approve it in the case of the Revolutionists who renounce God, destroy chapels, and persecute religion." And he added example to precept by accepting without the

least scruple the new kind of tithe which Marche-à-Terre offered him. "Besides," said he, "I can now devote all my goods to the defence of God and the King. My nephew has gone off with the Blues."

Meanwhile, Coupiau was bewailing his fate, and declaring that he was a ruined man.

"Come with us," said Marche-à-Terre, "you shall have your share."

"But they will think that I have let myself be robbed on purpose, if I return without any violence having been offered me."

"Oh, is that all?" said Marche-à-Terre.

He gave the word, and a volley riddled the turgotine. At this sudden discharge there came from the old coach so lamentable a howl that the Chouans, naturally superstitious, started back with fright. But Marche-à-Terre had caught sight of the pallid face of the silent passenger rising from, and then falling back into, a corner of the coach body.

"There is still a fowl in your coop," he whispered to Coupiau, and Pille-Miche, who understood the remark, winked knowingly.

"Yes," said the driver, "but I make it a condition of my joining you that you shall let me take the good man safe and sound to Fougères. I swore to do so by the Holy Saint of Auray."

"Who is he?" asked Pille-Miche.

"I cannot tell you," answered Coupiau.

"Let him alone," said Marche-à-Terre, jogging Pille-Miche's elbow, "he has sworn by Saint Anne of Auray, and he must keep his promise. But," continued the Chouan, addressing Coupiau, "do not you go down the hill too fast, we will catch you up on business. I want to see your passenger's phiz, and then we will give him a passport."

At that moment a horse's gallop was heard, the sound

nearing rapidly from the Pilgrim side: and soon the young chief appeared. The lady hastily concealed the bag she held in her hand.

"You need have no scruple in keeping that money," said the young man, drawing her arm forward again. "Here is a letter from your mother which I found among those waiting for me at the Vivetière." He looked by turns at the Chouans who were disappearing in the woods and the coach which was descending the valley of the Couësnon, and added, "For all the haste I made, I did not come up in time. Heaven grant I may be deceived in my suspicions."

"It is my poor mother's money!" cried the lady, after opening the letter, the first lines of which drew the exclamation from her. There was a sound of stifled laughter from the woods, and even the young chief could not help laughing as he saw her clutching the bag containing her own share of the plunder of her own money. Indeed, she began to laugh herself.

"Well, marquis," said she to the chief, "God be praised! At any rate I come off blameless this time."

"Will you never be serious, not even in remorse?" said the young man.

She blushed and looked at the marquis with an air so truly penitent that it disarmed him. The abbé politely, but with a rather doubtful countenance, restored the tithe which he had just accepted, and then followed the chief, who was making his way to the by-path by which he had come. Before joining them the young lady made a sign to Marche-à-Terre, who came up to her.

"Go and take up your position in front of Mortagne," she said, in a low voice. "I know that the Blues are going to send almost immediately a great sum in cash to Alençon to defray the expenses of preparing for war. If I give up to-day's booty to our comrades, it is on condition that they take

care to make up my loss. But above all things take care that the Gars knows nothing of the object of this expedition: he would very likely oppose it. If things go wrong, I will appease him."

"Madame," said the marquis, whose horse she mounted behind him, giving her own to the abbé, "my friends at Paris write to bid us look to ourselves, for the Republic will try to fight us underhand, and by trickery."

"They might do worse," said she. "The rascals are clever. I shall be able to take a part in the war, and find opponents of my own stamp."

"Not a doubt of it," cried the marquis. "Pichegru bids me be very cautious and circumspect in making acquaintances of every kind. The Republic does me the honour of thinking me more dangerous than all the Vendeans put together, and counts on my foibles to get hold of me."

"Would you distrust *me?*" she said, patting his heart with the hand by which she clung to him.

"If I did, would you be there, madame?" answered he, and turned towards her his forehead, which she kissed.

"Then," said the abbé, "we have more to fear from Fouché's police than from the battalions of mobiles, and the Anti-Chouans?"

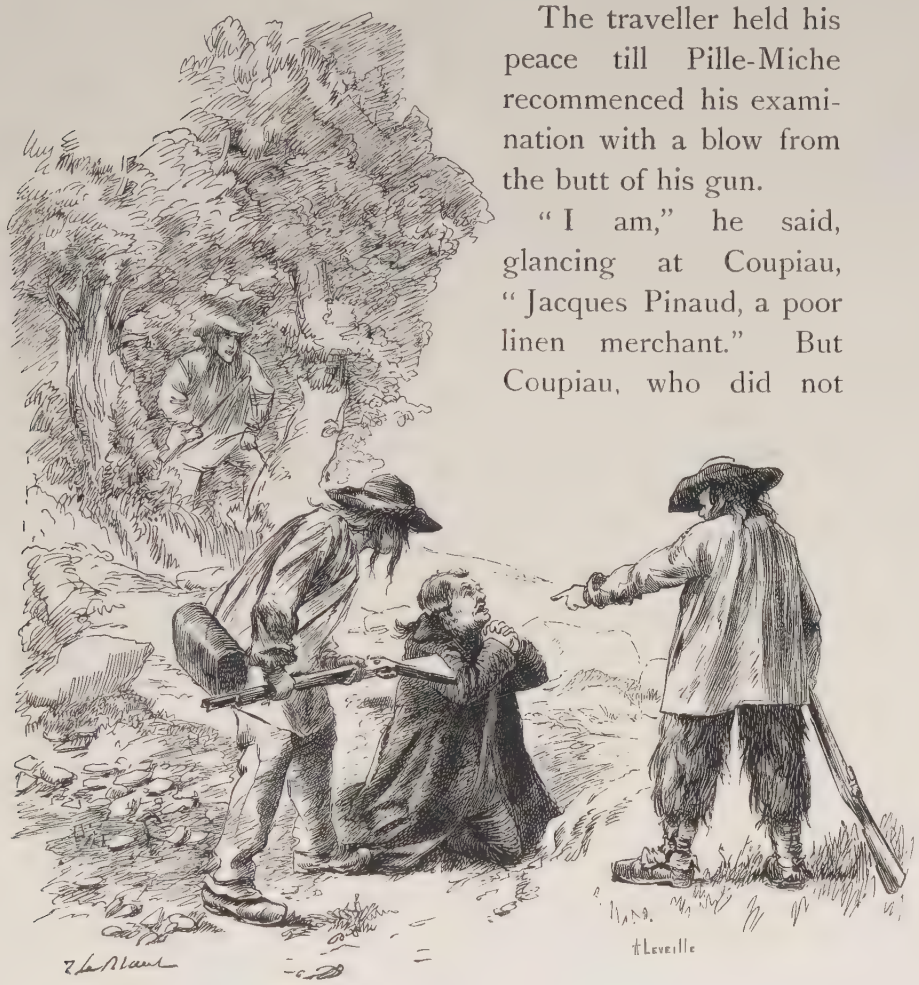
"Exactly, your reverence."

"Aha!" said the lady, "Fouché is going to send women against you, is he? I shall be ready for them," she added, in a voice deeper than usual, and after a slight pause.

Some three or four gunshots off from the waste plateau which the leaders were now leaving, there was passing at the moment one of those scenes which, for some time to come, became not uncommon on the highways. On the outskirts of the little village of the Pilgrim, Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre had once more stopped the coach at a spot where the road dipped. Coupiau had left his box after a

slight resistance; and the silent passenger, extracted from his hiding-place by the two Chouans, was on his knees in a broom-thicket.

"Who are you?" asked Marche-à-Terre, in a sinister tone.



The traveller held his peace till Pille-Miche recommenced his examination with a blow from the butt of his gun.

"I am," he said, glancing at Coupiau, "Jacques Pinaud, a poor linen merchant." But Coupiau, who did not think that he broke his word by so doing, shook his head. The gesture enlightened Pille-Miche, who took aim at the traveller, while Marche-à-Terre laid before him in plain terms this alarming ultimatum:

"You are too fat for a poor man with a poor man's cares.

If you give us the trouble of asking your real name once more, my friend Pille-Miche here will earn the esteem and gratitude of your heirs by one little gunshot. Who are you?" he added, after a brief interval.

"I am d'Orgemont, of Fougères."

"Aha!" cried the Chouans.

"*I* did not tell your name, M. d'Orgemont," said Coupiau. "I call the Holy Virgin to witness that I defended you bravely."

"As you are *Monsieur* d'Orgemont, of Fougères," went on Marche-à-Terre, with a mock-respectful air, "you shall be let go quite quietly. But as you are neither a good Chouan, nor a true Blue (though you did buy the estates of Juvigny Abbey), you shall pay us," said the Chouan, in the tone of a man who is counting up his comrades, "three hundred crowns of six francs each as a ransom. That is not too much to pay for the privilege of being neutral."

"Three hundred crowns of six francs!" repeated the luckless banker, Pille-Miche, and Coupiau in chorus, but each in very different tones.

"Alas! my dear sir," said d'Orgemont, "I am a ruined man. The forced loan of one hundred millions levied by this devilish Republic, which assesses me at terrible rates, has drained me dry."

"And pray, how much did the Republic ask of you?"

"A thousand crowns, dear sir," said the banker, in a lamentable tone, hoping to be let off something.

"If the Republic borrows such large sums from you, and forces you to pay them, you must see that your interest lies with us, whose government is less expensive. Do you mean to say that three hundred crowns is too much to pay for your skin?"

"But where am I to get them?"

"Out of your strong-box," said Pille-Miche, "and take

care your crowns are not clipped, or we will clip your nails in the fire for you."

"But where am I to pay them?" asked d'Orgemont.

"Your country house at Fougères is close to the farm of Gibarry, where dwells my cousin Galope-Chopine, otherwise called Long Cibot. You shall pay them to him," said Pille-Miche.

"But that is not business," said d'Orgemont.

"What do we care for that?" replied Marche-à-Terre. "Remember that if the crowns are not paid to Galope-Chopine in fifteen days' time, we will pay you a little visit which will cure you of gout if you have got it in your feet. As for you, Coupiau," continued he, turning to the conductor, "your name henceforth shall be Mène-à-Bien." And with these words the two Chouans departed, and the traveller climbed up again into the coach, which Coupiau, whipping up his steeds, drove rapidly toward Fougères.

"If you had been armed," said Coupiau, "we might have made a little better fight of it."

"Silly fellow," answered d'Orgemont, "I have got ten thousand francs there," and he pointed to his great shoes. "Is it worth fighting when one has such a sum on one as that?"

Mène-à-Bien scratched his ear and looked backwards, but all trace of his new friends had disappeared.

Hulot and his soldiers halted at Ernée to deposit the wounded in the hospital of the little town: and then, without any further inconvenient incident interrupting the march of the Republican force, made their way to Mayenne. There the commandant was able next day to put an end to his doubts about the progress of the mail: for the townsfolk received news of the robbery of the coach.

A few days later the authorities brought into Mayenne numbers of patriot conscripts, sufficient to enable Hulot to fill up the ranks of his demi-brigade. But there soon followed disquieting reports as to the insurrection. There was complete revolt at every point where, in the last war, the Chouans and Vendeans had established the principal centres of their outbreak. In Brittany, the Royalists had seized Pontorson, so as to open communications with the sea. They had taken the little town of Saint James between Pontorson and Fougères, and seemed disposed to make it for the time their place of arms, a headquarters of their magazines and of their operations, from which without danger they could correspond both with Normandy and Morbihan. The inferior leaders were scouring these districts with the view of exciting the partisans of monarchy, and arranging if possible a systematic effort. These machinations were reported at the same time as news from La Vendée, where similar intrigues were stirring up the country, under the direction of four famous leaders, the Abbé Vernal, the Comte de Fontaine, M. de Chatillon, and M. Suzannet. The Chevalier de Valois, the Marquis

d'Esgrignon, and the Troisvilles acted, it was said, as their agents in the department of the Orne. But the real chief of the extensive scheme which was unfolding itself, slowly but in an alarming fashion, was "the Gars," a nickname given by the Chouans to the Marquis de Montauran as soon as he had landed.

The information sent to the Government by Hulot turned out correct in every particular. The authority of the chief sent from abroad had been at once acknowledged. Indeed, the marquis was acquiring sufficient influence over the Chouans to enable him to give them a glimmering of the true objects of the war, and to persuade them that the excesses of which they had been guilty were tarnishing the noble cause to which they devoted themselves. The bold temper, the courage, the coolness, the ability of this young lord revived the hopes of the Republic's enemies, and administered so lively an impulse to the gloomy fanaticism of the district, that even lukewarm partisans laboured to bring about results decisive in favour of the stricken monarchy. Meanwhile, Hulot received no answer to the repeated demands and reports which he kept sending to Paris, and this astounding silence boded beyond doubt some new crisis in the fortunes of the Republic.

"Can it be now," said the old chief to his friends, "with the Government as it is with men who are dunned for money? do they put all demands in the waste-paper basket?"

But before long there spread the rumour of the return, as if by enchantment, of General Bonaparte, and of the events of the 18th Brumaire, and the military commanders in the West were not slow to understand the silence of the ministers. Nevertheless, these commanders were only the more impatient to get rid of the responsibility which weighed on them, and felt a lively curiosity to know what

measures the new Government would take. When they learnt that General Bonaparte had been appointed first consul of the Republic, the soldiers felt keen pleasure: seeing for the first time one of their own men promoted to the management of affairs. All France, which idolized the young general, trembled with hope: and the national energy revived. The capital, weary of dulness and gloom, gave itself up to the festivals and amusements of which it had so long been deprived. The earlier acts of the consulate disappointed no expectations, and Freedom felt no qualms. Soon the First Consul addressed a proclamation to the inhabitants of the West, one of those eloquent allocutions directed to the masses which Bonaparte had, so to say, invented, and which produced in those days of prodigious patriotism effects altogether miraculous. His voice echoed through the world like that of a prophet: for as yet no one of these manifestoes had failed to be confirmed by victory. Thus it ran:

"DWELLERS IN THE WEST,

"For the second time an impious war has set your departments in a flame.

"The authors of these troubles are traitors, who have sold themselves to the English, or brigands who seek in civil disorder nothing but occasion and immunity for their crimes.

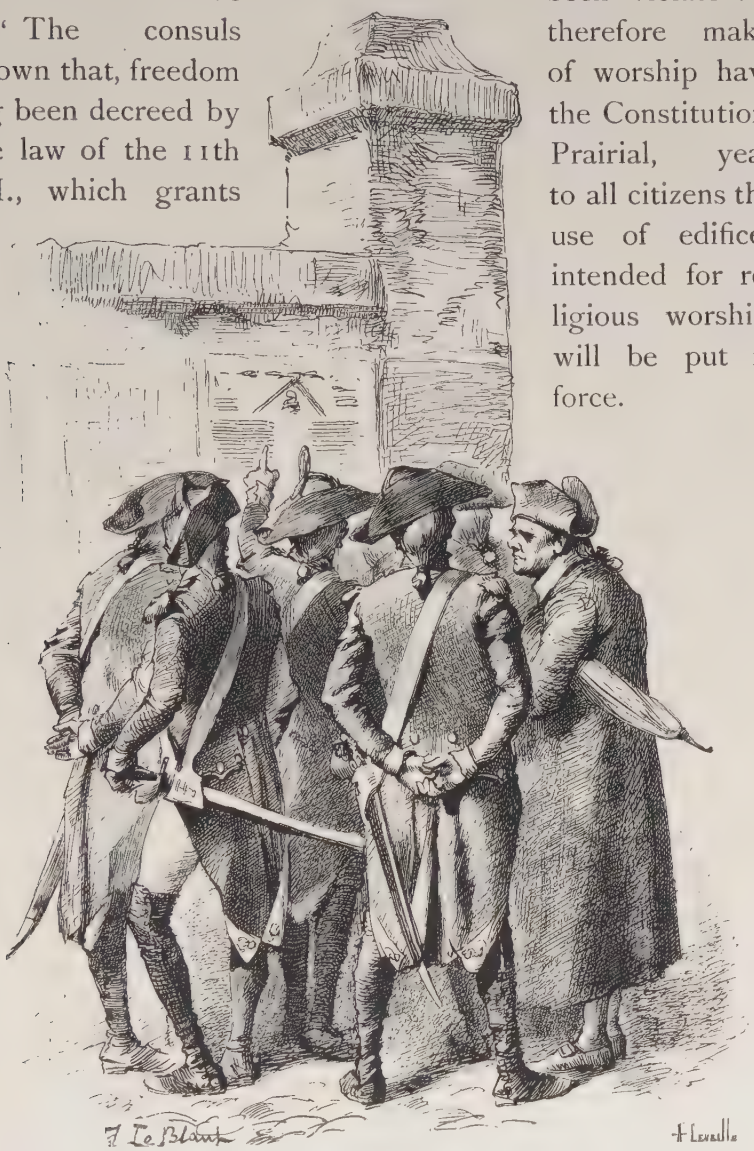
"To such men Government can neither show clemency, nor even make a declaration of its own principles.

"But there are some citizens still dear to their country who have been seduced by the artifices of these men, and these citizens deserve enlightenment and the communication of the truth.

"Some unjust laws have been decreed and put in execution: some arbitrary acts have disturbed the citizens' sense of personal safety and their liberty of conscience; every-

where the rash insertion of names in the list of emigrants has done harm to patriots: in short, the great principles of social order have been violated.

"The consuls therefore make known that, freedom of worship having been decreed by the law of the 11th Prairial, year III., which grants the Constitution, to all citizens the use of edifices intended for religious worship, will be put in force.



"The Government will show mercy: it will extend to the repentant an entire and absolute indemnity. But it

will strike down all those who after this announcement dare to continue resistance to the sovereignty of the people."

"Quite paternal, is it not?" said Hulot, after this consular allocution had been publicly read, "yet, you will see, not one Royalist brigand will be converted by it."

The commandant was right, and the proclamation did nothing but attach each partisan more strongly to his own party. A few days later Hulot and his colleagues received reinforcements; and the new Minister of War sent information that General Brune had been appointed to the command of the forces in the West of France, while Hulot, whose experience was well known, had provisional authority in the departments of Orne and Mayenne. Soon a hitherto unknown activity set all the springs of administration working. A circular from the Minister of War and the Minister of General Police announced that vigorous measures, the execution of which was entrusted to the heads of the military, had been taken to stifle the insurrection at its source. But the Chouans and the Vendeans had already profited by the sluggishness of the Republic to raise the country and to gain complete possession of it. Accordingly, a new consular proclamation was launched, addressed this time to the troops:

"Soldiers,

"There are now in the West no enemies but bandits, emigrants, and the hirelings of England.

"The army consists of more than sixty thousand gallant men: let me learn soon that the rebel chiefs are no more. Glory is to be gained by toil: who would be without it if it were to be won by keeping to barracks in the cities?

"Soldiers, no matter what your rank in the army may be, the gratitude of the nation awaits you! To deserve it you must brave the inclemency of the seasons, ice, snow,

the bitter cold of night: you must surprise your enemies at break of day, and put the wretches, the scandal of France, to the sword!

"Let your campaign be brief and successful: give no mercy to the bandits, but observe the strictest discipline.

"National Guards! let the effort of your arms be joined to that of the troops of the line.

"If you know of any men among you who are partisans of the bandits, arrest them! Let them find nowhere any shelter from the pursuing soldier; and if there be any traitors who dare to harbour and defend them, let both perish together!"

"What a fellow!" cried Hulot. "It is just as it was in Italy: he rings the bell for mass, and says it, all by himself. That is the way to talk."

"Yes: but he talks by himself and in his own name," said Gérard, who was beginning to dread what might come of the 18th Brumaire.

"Odds sentries and sentry boxes!" said Merle. "What does that matter, since he is a soldier?"

A few paces off some of the rank and file were clustering round the proclamation which was stuck on the wall. Now, as not a man of them could read, they gazed at it, some indifferently, others curiously, while two or three scanned the passers-by for a citizen who looked learned.

"Come, Clef-des-Cœurs," said Beau-Pied mockingly to his comrade, "what does that rag there say?"

"It is easy to guess," answered Clef-des-Cœurs. And as he spoke all looked at the pair, who were always ready to play each his part.

"Look there!" continued Clef-des-Cœurs, pointing to a rough cut at the head of the proclamation, where for some days past a compass had replaced the level of 1793. "It

means that we fellows have got to step out. They have stuck a compass [1] open on it for an emblem."

"My boy, don't play the learned man; it is not 'emblem' but 'problem.' I served first with the gunners," said Beau-Pied, "and the officers were busy about nothing else."

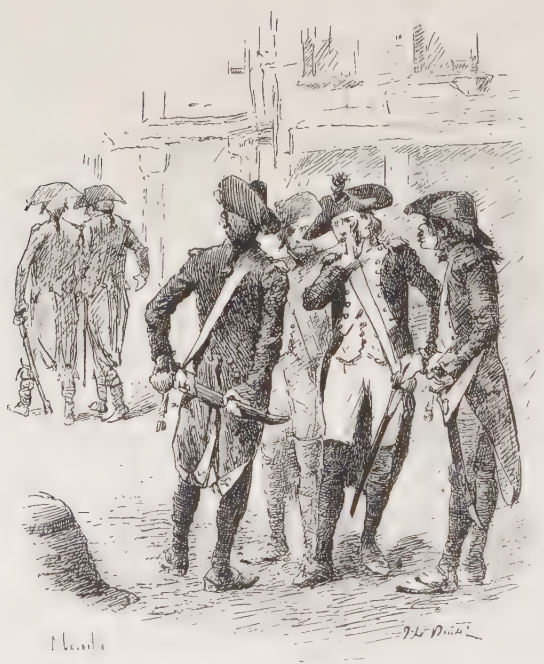
"'Tis an emblem!" "'Tis a problem!" "Let us have a bet on it." "What?" "Your German pipe." "Done!"

"Ask your pardon, adjutant, but is it not 'emblem,' and not 'problem'?" said Clef-des-Cœurs to Gérard, who was thoughtfully following Hulot and Merle.

"'Tis both one and the other," said he, gravely.

"The adjutant is making game of us," said Beau-Pied. "The paper means that our General of Italy is made consul (a fine commission!) and that we shall get greatcoats and boots!"

[1] This refers to the French idiom, *ouvrir le compas*, meaning "stir the stumps," "step out."—*Translator's Note.*



CHAPTER II.

A NOTION OF FOUCHÉ'S.

TOWARDS the end of the month of Brumaire, while Hulot was superintending the morning drill of his demi-brigade, the whole of which had been drawn together at Mayenne by orders from headquarters, an express from Alençon delivered to him certain despatches, during the reading of which very decided vexation showed itself on his face.

"Well, then, to business!" cried he, somewhat ill-temperedly, thrusting the papers in the crown of his hat. "Two companies are to set out with me and march towards Mortagne. The Chouans are about there. You will come with me," said he to Merle and Gérard. "May they make a noble of me if I understand a word of my despatches! I dare say I am only a fool. But never mind! let us get to work: there is no time to lose."

"Why, commandant, is there any very savage beast in the game-bag there?" asked Merle, pointing to the official envelope of the despatch.

"God's thunder! there is nothing at all: except that they are bothering us!"

When the commandant let slip this military expression (or rather that for which, as mentioned before, we have substituted it), it always pointed to bad weather: and its various intonations made up as it were a series of degrees which acted as a thermometer of their chief's temper to the demi-brigade. Indeed, the old soldier's frankness had made the interpretation so easy, that the sorriest drummer-boy in the regiment soon knew his Hulot by heart, thanks to mere observation of the changes in the grimace with which the commandant cocked his cheek and winked his eye. This time the tone of sullen wrath with which he accompanied the word made his two friends silent and watchful. The very pock-marks which pitted his martial visage seemed to deepen, and his complexion took a browner tan. It had happened that his mighty plaited pigtail had fallen forward on one of his epaulettes when he put on his cocked hat, and Hulot jerked it back with such rage that the curls were all disordered. Yet, as he stood motionless, with clenched fists, his arms folded on his breast, and his moustache bristling, Gérard ventured to ask him: "Do we start at once?"

"Yes: if the cartridge-boxes are full," growled Hulot.

"They are."

"Shoulder arms! File to the left! Forward! March!" said Gérard, at a sign from the chief.

The drummers placed themselves at the head of the two companies pointed out by Gérard: and as the drums began to beat, the commandant, who had been plunged in thought, seemed to wake up, and left the town, accompanied by his two friends, to whom he did not address a word. Merle

and Gérard looked at each other several times without speaking, as if to ask, "Will he sulk with us long?" and as they marched, they stole glances at Hulot, who was still growling unintelligible words between his teeth. Several times the soldiers heard him swearing: but not one of them opened his lips; for, at the right time, they all knew how to observe the stern discipline to which the troops who had served under Bonaparte in Italy had become accustomed. Most of them were, like Hulot himself, relics of the famous battalions that capitulated at Mayence on a promise that they should not be employed on the frontiers, and who were called in the army the "Mayençais:" nor would it have been easy to find officers and men who understood each other better.

On the day following that on which they set out, Hulot and his friends found themselves at early morning on the Alençon road, about a league from that city, in the direction of Mortagne, where the road borders meadows watered by the Sarthe. Over these a succession of picturesque landscapes opens to the left, while the right side, composed of thick woods which join on to the great forest of Menil-Broust, sets off (if we may use the painter's term) the softer views of the river. The footpaths at the edge of the road are shut in by ditches, the earth of which, constantly turned up towards the fields, produces high slopes crowned by *ajoncs*, as they call the thorny broom throughout the West. This shrub, which branches out in thick bushes, affords during the winter capital fodder for horses and cattle: but, before its harvest, the Chouans used to hide behind its dark green tufts. These slopes and their *ajoncs*, which tell the traveller that he is drawing near Brittany, made this part of the road at that time as hazardous as it is still beautiful.

The dangers which were likely to be met in the journey from Mortagne to Alençon, and from Alençon to Mayenne,

were the cause of Hulot's expedition : and at this very point the secret of his wrath at last escaped him. He was acting as escort to an old mail-coach drawn by post-horses, whose pace the weariness of his own soldiers kept to a slow walk. The companies of Blues (forming part of the garrison of Mortagne) which had escorted this wretched vehicle to the limits of their own appointed district, where Hulot had come to relieve them, were already on their way home, and appeared afar off like black dots. One of the old Republican's own companies was placed a few paces behind the coach, and the other in front of it. Hulot, who was between Merle and Gérard, about half-way between the coach and the vanguard, suddenly said to them :

"A thousand thunders! Would you believe that the general packed us off from Mayenne to dance attendance on the two petticoats in this old wagon ?"

"But, commandant," answered Gérard, "when we took up our post an hour ago with the citizenesses, you bowed to them quite politely !"

"There is just the shame of it ! Don't these Paris dandies request us to show the greatest respect to their d——d females? To think that they should insult good and brave patriots like us by tying us to the tail of a woman's skirt ! For my part, you know, I run straight myself, and do not like dodgings in others. When I saw Danton with his mistresses, Barras with his, I told them, 'Citizens, when the Republic set you to govern, she did not mean to license the games of the old régime.' You will reply that women——Oh ! one must have women, of course ! Brave fellows deserve women, and good women, too. But it is no use chattering when there is mischief at hand. What was the good of making short work of the abuses of the old days, if patriots are to start them afresh ? Look at the First Consul, there is a man for you : no women about him, always at his

business. I will bet my left moustache that he knows nothing of this stupid errand they have sent us on."

"Faith! commandant," answered Merle, laughing, "as for the young lady who is stowed in the coach, I have only seen the tip of her nose: but I must say nobody need be ashamed of feeling what I feel—an itch to hang about the carriage and strike up a little talk with our fair travellers."

"Take care, Merle," said Gérard. "The pretty birds have got a citizen with them who is sly enough to lay a trap for you."

"What! that *incroyable*, with his little eyes dancing from one side of the road to the other as if he saw Chouans there? That dandy, whose legs are nearly invisible, and who looks like a duck with its head sticking out of a pasty when the carriage hides his horse's body? If such a donkey as that ever hinders me from stroking the pretty sparrow——"

"Duck, sparrow! my poor Merle, your thoughts are running strangely on birds. Don't be too sure of your duck. His green eyes look to me as treacherous as a viper's, and as cunning as those of a wife who forgives her husband. I mistrust the Chouans themselves less than these lawyers, with faces like a bottle of lemonade."

"Bah!" cried Merle, gaily; "with the commandant's permission I'll take the risk. The girl has eyes like stars; it is worth staking high for the chance of looking at them."

"He is hard hit, this comrade of ours," said Gérard to the commandant; "he begins to wander in his speech."

Hulot made a face, shrugged his shoulders, and answered:

"Before sipping his soup, I would have him try its odour."

"Good Merle!" continued Gérard, guessing by his friend's slackening his pace that he was manœuvring to let the coach come up with him. "What a merry fellow

he is. He might laugh at a comrade's death without being thought heartless!"

"He is a true French soldier," said Hulot, in a grave tone.

"Look at him settling his epaulettes on his shoulders, that they may see he is a captain!" cried Gérard, laughing; "as if the rank had anything to do with the matter!"

The carriage towards which the officer was making way did, in fact, contain two women, one of whom seemed to be the other's attendant.

"These cattle always run in couples," said Hulot.

A short man, thin and shrivelled, made his horse prance, sometimes before, sometimes behind the coach; but though he seemed to be the favoured travellers' companion, no one had seen him speak to them. His silence, which might mean either contempt or respect, the amount of the baggage, the bandboxes of her whom the commandant called "a princess," all, even to the costume of the attendant cavalier, had helped to stir Hulot's bile. The stranger's dress supplied a faithful picture of the fashion which gave us at that time the caricatures of the *Incroyables*. Readers must imagine a personage arrayed in a coat the front skirts of which were so short that they showed five or six inches of waistcoat below them, and the skirts behind so long that they resembled a codfish's tail, by which phrase, indeed, they were

commonly designated. An immense cravat formed round his neck such innumerable folds that the little head, emerging from a labyrinth of muslin, almost justified Captain Merle's kitchen simile. The stranger wore tight breeches, and boots *à la* Suwarrow; a huge white and blue cameo was stuck, as a pin, in his shirt. Two watch-chains hung in parallel festoons at his waist; and his hair, hanging in corkscrew curls on each side of the face, almost hid his forehead. Finally, as a last touch of decoration, the collars of his shirt and his coat rose so high, that his head presented the appearance of a bouquet in its paper wrapping. If there be added to these insignificant details, which formed a mass of disparities with no ensemble, the absurd contrast of his yellow breeches, his red waistcoat, his cinnamon-brown coat, a faithful portrait will be given of the height of fashion at which dandies aimed at the beginning of the Consulate. Preposterous as the costume was, it seemed to have been invented as a sort of touchstone of elegance, to show that nothing can be too absurd for fashion to hallow it. The rider appeared full thirty years old, though he was not in reality more than twenty-two: an appearance due perhaps to hard living, perhaps to the dangers of the time. Yet, though he was dressed like a mountebank, his air announced a certain polish of manners which revealed the well-bred man. No sooner did the captain approach the carriage than the dandy seemed to guess his purpose, and facilitated it by checking his horse's pace; Merle, who had cast a sarcastic glance at him, being met by one of those impassive faces, which the vicissitudes of the Revolution had taught to hide even the least emotion. As soon as the ladies perceived the slouched corner of the captain's old cocked hat, and his epaulettes, an angelically sweet voice asked:

"Sir officer! will you have the kindness to tell us at what point of the road we are?"

A question from an unknown traveller, and that traveller a woman, always has a singular charm, and her least word seems to promise an adventure: but if the lady appears to ask protection, relying on her weakness and her ignorance of facts, where is the man who is not slightly inclined to build a castle in the air, with a happy ending for himself? So the words "Monsieur l'officier," and the ceremonious form of the question, excited a strange disturbance in the captain's heart. He tried to see what the fair traveller was like, and was completely baffled, a jealous veil hiding her features from him; he could hardly see even the eyes, though they flashed through the gauze like two onyx stones caught by the sun.

"You are now a league distant from Alençon, madame," said he.

"Alençon, already?" And the unknown lady threw herself, or let herself fall back in the carriage, without further reply.

"Alençon?" repeated the other girl, as if waking from sleep; "you will see our country again——"

She looked at the captain, and held her peace. But Merle, finding himself deceived in his hope of seeing the fair stranger, set himself to scan her companion. She was a girl of about six-and-twenty, fair, well-shaped, and with a complexion showing the clear skin and brilliant tints which distinguish the women of Valognes, Bayeux, and the district round Alençon. The glances of her blue eyes did not speak wit, but a resolute temper, mingled with tenderness. She wore a gown of common stuff, and her hair plainly caught up under a cap, in the style of the Pays de Caux, gave her face a touch of charming simplicity. Nor was her general air, though it lacked the conventional distinction of society, devoid of the dignity natural to a modest young girl who can survey her past life without finding

anything to repent in it. At a glance Merle could discover in her a country blossom which, though transplanted to the Parisian hothouses, where so many scorching rays are concentrated, had lost nothing of its bright purity or of its rustic freshness. The young girl's unstudied air, and her modest looks, told him that she did not desire a listener; and he had no sooner retired than the two fair strangers began, in a low voice, a conversation whereof his ear could scarcely catch the bare sound.

"You started in such a hurry," said the country girl, "that you scarcely took time to dress yourself. You are a pretty figure! If we are going farther than Alençon, we really must make a fresh toilette there."

"Oh, oh, Francine!" cried the stranger.

"Yes?"

"That is the third time you have tried to fish out the end and object of our journey."

"Did I say the very least thing to deserve that reproach?"

"Oh! I saw through your little device. Innocent and simple as you used to be, you have learnt a few tricks in my school. You have already taken a dislike to direct questioning, and you are right, child; of all known manners of extracting information, it is, to my thinking, the silliest."

"Well, then," went on Francine, "as nothing can escape you, confess, Marie, would not your behaviour excite the curiosity of a saint? Yesterday you had not a penny, to-day your pockets are full of gold. They have given you at Mortagne the mail-coach which had been robbed, and its guard killed; you have an escort of Government troops, and you have in your suite a man whom I take to be your evil angel."

"What, Corentin?" said the young stranger, marking her words by a couple of changes of voice, full of contempt—contempt which even extended to the gesture with which

she pointed to the rider. "Listen, Francine," she continued, "do you remember Patriot, the monkey whom I taught to imitate Danton, and who amused us so much?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Well; were you afraid of him?"

"He was chained up."

"Well, Corentin is muzzled, child."

"We used," said Francine, "to play with Patriot for hours together, to be sure; but it never ended without his playing us some ugly trick;" and with these words she fell back in the carriage, close to her mistress, took her hands and caressed them coaxingly, saying to her in affectionate tones:

"But you know what I mean, Marie, and you will not answer me. How is it that in twenty-four hours, after those fits of sadness which grieved me, oh! so much, you can be madly merry, just as you were when you talked of killing yourself? Whence this change? I have a right to ask you to let me see a little of your heart. It is mine before it is anyone's: for never will you be better loved than I love you. Speak, mademoiselle."

"Well, Francine, do you not see the reasons of my gaiety all round us? Look at the yellowing tufts of those distant trees; there are not two alike; at a distance one might think them a piece of old tapestry. Look at those hedgerows behind which we may meet with Chouans every moment. As I look at these broom bushes I think I can see gun-barrels. I love this constant peril that surrounds us. Wherever the road grows a little gloomy I expect that we shall hear a volley in a moment; and then my heart beats, and a new sensation stirs me. Nor is it either the tremor of fear or the fluttering of pleasure; no! it is something better; it is the working of all that is active in me: it is life. Should I not be merry when I feel my life once more alive?"

"Ah! cruel girl, you will say nothing? Holy Virgin!" cried Francine, lifting her eyes sorrowfully to heaven, "to whom will she confess if she is silent to me?"

"Francine," said the stranger, gravely, "I cannot reveal my business to you. It is something terrible this time."

"But why do evil when you know that you are doing it?"

"What would you have? I catch myself thinking as if I were fifty, and acting as if I were fifteen. You have always been my common sense, poor girl! but in this business I must stifle my conscience. And yet," she said, with a sigh, after an interval, "I cannot succeed in doing so. Now, how can you ask me to set over myself a confessor so stern as you are?"

And she patted her hand gently.

"And when did I ever reproach you with what you have done?" cried Francine, "Evil itself is charming in you. Yes: Saint Anne of Auray herself, to whom I pray so hard for you, would give you pardon for all. Besides, have I not followed you on this journey without the least knowledge whither you are going?" and she kissed her mistress's hands affectionately.

"But," said Marie, "you can leave me if your conscience——"

"Come, madame, do not talk like that," said Francine, making a grimace of vexation. "Oh! will you not tell me?"

"I will tell you nothing," said the young lady firmly, "only be assured of this, I hate my enterprise even worse than I hate the man whose gilded tongue expounded it to me. I will be so frank with you as to confess that I would never have submitted to their will if I had not seen in the matter, shameful farce as it is, a mixture of danger and of romance which tempted me. Besides, I did not wish to leave this earth of ours without having tried to gather flowers of which I have still some hope, were I to perish in the attempt. But remember, as something to redeem my memory, that had I been happy, the sight of their guillotine ready to drop on my head would never have made me take a part in this tragedy—for tragedy as well as farce it is. And now," she continued with a gesture of disgust, "if they changed their minds and counter-ordered the plan, I would throw myself into the Sarthe this moment, and it would not be a suicide: for I have never yet lived."

"Oh! Holy Virgin of Auray! pardon her!"

"What are you afraid of? you know that the dull alternations of domestic life leave my passions cold. That is ill in a woman: but my soul has gained the habit of a higher kind of emotion, able to support stronger trials. I might have been like you, a gentle creature. Why did I rise above or sink below the level of my sex? Ah! what a happy woman is General Bonaparte's wife! I am sure to die young, since I have already come to the point of not blanching at a pleasure party where there is blood to drink, as poor Danton used to say. But forget what I am saying: it is the woman fifty years old in me that spoke. Thank God! the girl of fifteen will soon make her appearance again."

The country maid shuddered. She alone knew the impetuous and ungoverned character of her mistress. She alone was acquainted with the strangenesses of her enthusiastic

soul, with the real feelings of the woman who, up to this time, had seen life float before her like an intangible shadow despite her constant effort to seize and fix it. After lavishing all her resources with no return, she had remained untouched by love. But, stung by a multitude of unfulfilled desires, weary of fighting without a foe, she had come in her despair to prefer good to evil when it offered itself in the guise of enjoyment, evil to good when there was a spice of romance in it, ruin to easy-going mediocrity as the grander of the two, the dark and mysterious prospect of death to a life bereft of hope or even of suffering. Never was such a powder magazine ready for the spark; never so rich a banquet prepared for love to revel in; never a daughter of Eve with more gold mingled throughout her clay. Francine, like an earthly providence, kept a watch over this strange being, whose perfections she worshipped and whose restoration to the celestial choir from which some sin of pride seemed to have banished her as an expiation, she regarded as the accomplishment of a heavenly mission.

"There is Alençon steeple," said the rider, drawing near the carriage.

"I see it," answered the young lady drily.

"Very well," quoth he, retiring with signs of obedience not the less absolute for his disappointment.

"Faster! faster!" said the lady to the postilion, "there is nothing to fear now. Trot or gallop if you can, are we not in Alençon streets?"

As she passed the commandant, she cried to him in her sweet voice: "We shall meet at the inn, commandant; come and see me there."

"Just so!" replied the commandant. "At the inn! come and see me! that is the way the creatures talk to a demi-brigadier." And he shook his fist at the carriage which was rolling rapidly along the road.

"Don't complain, commandant," laughed Corentin, who was trying to make his horse gallop so as to catch the carriage up. "She has your general's commission in her sleeve."

"Ah!" growled Hulot to his friend; "I will not let these gentry make an ass of me! I would rather pitch my general's uniform into a ditch than gain it in a woman's chamber. What do the geese mean? do you understand the thing, you fellows?"

"Well, yes," said Merle; "I understand that she is the prettiest woman I ever saw. I think you have mistaken the phrase. Perhaps it is the First Consul's wife?"

"Bah!" answered Hulot. "The First Consul's wife is an old woman, and this is a young one. Besides, my orders from the minister tell me that her name is Mademoiselle de Verneuil. She is a *ci-devant*. As if I did not know it! they all played that game before the Revolution. You could become a demi-brigadier then in two crotchets and six quavers; you only had to say 'my soul!' to them prettily two or three times."

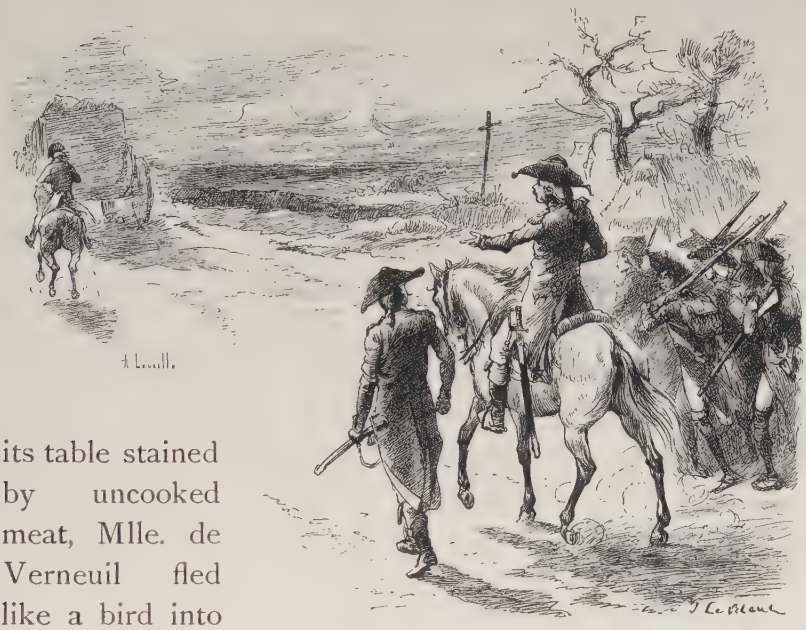
While each soldier stirred his stumps (in the commandant's phrase), the ugly vehicle which acted as mail-coach had quickly gained the hotel of "The Three Moors," situated in the middle of the high street of Alençon. The clatter and rattle of the shapeless carriage brought the host to the doorstep. Nobody in Alençon expected the chance of the mail-coach putting up at "The Three Moors:" but the tragedy which had happened at Mortagne made so many people follow it that the two travellers, to evade the general curiosity, slipped into the kitchen, the invariable antechamber of all western inns: and the host was about, after scanning the carriage, to follow them, when the postilion caught him by the arm.

"Attention! citizen Brutus," said he; "there is an

escort of Blues coming. As there is neither driver nor mail bags 'tis I who am bringing you the citizenesses. They will pay you, no doubt, like *ci-devant* princesses, and so——"

"And so we will have a glass of wine together in a minute, my boy," said the host.

After glancing at the kitchen, blackened by smoke, and



its table stained by uncooked meat, Mlle. de Verneuil fled like a bird into the next room, for she liked the kitchen sights and smells as little as the curiosity of a dirty man-cook and a short stout woman who were staring at her.

"What are we to do, wife?" said the innkeeper. "Who the devil would have thought that we should have company like this in these hard times? This lady will get out of patience before I can serve her a decent breakfast. Faith! I have a notion: as they are gentlefolk, I will propose that they should join the person upstairs, eh?"

But when the host looked for his new guest he only found Francine, to whom he said in a low tone, and taking her aside to the back of the kitchen, which looked towards the

yard, so as to be out of earshot: "If the ladies would like, as I doubt not, to eat in a private room, I have a delicate meal all ready for a lady and her son. The travellers," added he, with an air of mystery, "are not likely to object to share their breakfast with you. They are people of quality."

But he had hardly finished his sentence when he felt a slight tap from a whip-handle on his back, and turning sharply round he saw behind him a short, strongly-built man who had noiselessly issued from a neighbouring room, and whose appearance seemed to strike terror into the plump landlady, the cook, and the scullion. The host himself grew pale as he turned his head round; but the little man shook the hair which completely covered his forehead and eyes, stood on tiptoe to reach the host's ear, and said: "You know what any imprudence or any tale-bearing means? and what is the colour of our money when we pay for such things? We don't stint it."

And he added to his words a gesture which made a hideous commentary on them. Although the host's portly person prevented Francine from seeing the speaker, she caught a word or two of the sentences which he had whispered; and remained thunderstruck as she heard the harsh tones of the Breton's voice. While all besides were in consternation, she darted towards the little man; but he, whose movements had the celerity of a wild animal's, was already passing out by a side door into the yard. And Francine thought she must have been mistaken, for she saw nothing but what seemed the black and tan skin of a middle-sized bear. Startled, she ran to the window, and through its smoke-stained glass gazed at the stranger, who was making for the stable with halting steps. Before entering it he sent a glance of his black eyes to the first floor of the inn, and then to the stage-coach, as if he wished to give a hint of importance to some friend about the carriage. In

spite of the goat-skins, and thanks to this gesture, which revealed his face, Francine was able to recognize by his enormous whip and his gait—crawling, though agile enough at need—the Chouan nicknamed Marche-à-Terre. And she could descry him, though not clearly, across the dark stable, where he lay down in the straw, assuming a posture in which he could survey everything that went on in the inn. Marche-à-Terre had curled himself up in such a way that at a distance, nay, even close at hand, the cleverest spy might have easily taken him for one of the big carter's dogs, that sleep coiled round with mouth on paw. His behaviour showed Francine that he had not recognized her; and in the ticklish circumstances wherein her mistress was placed, she hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry for it. But the mysterious relations between the Chouan's threat and the offer of the host—an offer common enough with innkeepers, who like to take toll twice on the same goods—stimulated her curiosity. She left the blurred pane through which she had been looking at the shapeless mass which in the darkness indicated Marche-à-Terre's position, returned towards the innkeeper and perceived him looking like a man who has put his foot in it, and does not know how to draw it back. The Chouan's gesture had struck the poor man cold. No one in the West was ignorant of the cruel ingenuity of torture with which the King's Huntsmen punished those suspected of mere indiscretion, and the host felt their knives already at his throat. The cook stared with horrified glance at the hearth where they not seldom roasted the feet of those who had given information against them. The plump little landlady held a kitchen knife in one hand, a half-cut apple in the other, and gazed aghast at her husband, while, finally, the scullion tried to make out the meaning of this silent terror, which he did not understand. Francine's curiosity was naturally kindled by this dumb show, where the chief

actor, though not present, was in everyone's mind and sight. The girl felt rather pleased at the Chouan's terrible power, and though her simple character did not comport with the usual tricks of a waiting-maid, she had for the moment too great an interest in unravelling the secret not to make the best of her game.

"Well, mademoiselle accepts your offer," she said gravely to the host, who started as if suddenly awakened by the words.

"What offer?" asked he, with real surprise.

"What offer?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil.

"What offer?" asked a fourth personage, who happened to be on the lowest step of the staircase, and who bounded lightly into the kitchen.

"Why, to breakfast with your people of quality," said Francine impatiently.

"Of quality?" repeated the person who had come from the stairs, in an ironical and satiric tone. "My fine fellow, that seems to me an innkeeper's joke, and a bad one. But if it is this young citizeness that you want to give us as guest, one would be a fool to refuse, my good man," said he, looking at Mlle. de Verneuil. And he added, clapping the stupefied host on the shoulder, "In my mother's absence I accept."

The giddy grace of youth hid the insolent pride of these words, which naturally drew the attention of all the actors in the scene to the new arrival. Then the host assumed the air of a Pilate trying to wash his hands of the death of Christ, stepped back two paces towards his plump spouse, and said in her ear, "I call you to witness that if any harm happens it is not my fault. But," added he still lower, "to make sure, go and tell M. Marche-à-Terre all about it."

The traveller, a young man of middle height, wore a blue

coat and long black gaiters, which rose above his knees, over breeches also of blue cloth. This plain uniform, devoid of epaulettes, was that of the students of the Ecole Polytechnique. At a glance Mlle. de Verneuil could distinguish under the sober costume an elegant shape, and the *je ne*

sais quoi which announces native nobility. The young man's face, not striking at first sight, soon became noticeable owing to a certain conformation of feature which showed a soul capable of great things. A brown complexion, fair curly hair, a finely-cut nose, motions full of ease, all, in short, declared in him a course of life guided by lofty sentiments and the habit of command. But the most unmistakable symptoms of his talents were a chin of the Bonaparte type, and a lower lip which joined the upper with such a graceful curve as the acanthus leaf under a Corinthian capital describes. Nature

had clothed these two features with an irresistibly winning grace.

"The young man looks, for a Republican, remarkably like a gentleman," said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself. To see all this at a glance, to be seized with the desire of pleasing, to bend her head gracefully to one side, smile coquettishly, and dart one of those velvet glances which would rekindle a heart dead to love, to drop over her almond-shaped black eyes deep lids whose lashes, long and bent, made a brown line on her cheek, to devise the most melodious tones with which her voice could infuse a subtle charm into the commonplace phrase, "We are very much obliged to you, sir"—all this manœuvring did not take her the time which it takes to describe it. Then Mlle. de Verneuil, addressing the host, inquired after her room, perceived the staircase, and disappeared up it with Francine, leaving the stranger to settle for himself whether the reply implied acceptance or refusal.

"Who is the woman?" said the student of the Ecole Polytechnique briskly, to the motionless and ever more stupefied host.

"'Tis the citizeness Verneuil," replied Corentin in a sour tone, scanning the young man jealously, "and she is a *ci-devant*. What do you want with her?"

The stranger, who was humming a Republican song, lifted his head haughtily towards Corentin. The two young men glared at each other for a moment like two gamecocks on the point of fighting; and the glance was the seed of an eternal and mutual hatred. Corentin's green eyes announced spite and treachery as clearly as the soldier's blue ones promised frankness. The one was born to noble manners, the other had nothing but acquired insinuation. The one towered, the other crouched. The one commanded respect, and the other tried to obtain it. The motto of the one

should have been "Gain the day!" of the other, "Share the booty!"

"Is Citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr here?" said a peasant who entered.

"What do you want with him?" said the young man, coming forward.

The peasant bowed low and handed him a letter, which the cadet threw into the fire after he had read it. By way of answer he nodded, and the man disappeared.

"You come from Paris, no doubt, citizen," said Corentin, coming towards the stranger with a certain easiness of manner, and with an air of suppleness and conciliation which seemed to be more than the Citizen du Gua could bear.

"Yes," he answered drily.

"And of course you have a commission in the artillery?"

"No, citizen; in the navy."

"Ah!" said Corentin carelessly, "then you are going to Brest?"

But the young sailor turned abruptly on his heel without deigning to answer, and soon disappointed the fond hopes which his face had inspired in Mlle. de Verneuil. He busied himself in ordering his breakfast with the levity of a child, cross-examined the host and hostess as to their receipts, wondered at provincial ways, like a Parisian just extracted from his enchanted shell, gave himself the airs and megrims of a coquette, and, in short, showed as little strength of character as his face and manners had at first promised much. Corentin smiled with pity when he saw him make faces as he tasted the best cider in Normandy.

"Bah!" cried he, "how can you people drink that stuff? there is food and drink both in it. The Republic may well be shy of a country where they make the vintage with blows of a pole, and shoot travellers from behind a hedge on the

high roads. Don't put doctors' stuff like that on the table for us : but give us some good Bordeaux, white and red too. And be sure there is a good fire upstairs. These good folk seem to be quite behind the times in matter of civilization. Ah!" he went on with a sigh, "there is only one Paris in the world, and great pity it is that one can't take it to sea with one. Why, you spoil-sauce!" cried he to the cook, "you are putting vinegar in that fricasseed chicken when you have got lemons at hand.—And as for you, Mrs. Landlady, you have given us such coarse sheets that I have not slept a wink all night."

Then he began to play with a large cane, going with childish exactitude through the evolutions which, as they were performed with greater or less finish and skill, indicated the higher or lower rank of a young man in the army of Incroyables.

"And 'tis with dandies like that," said Corentin confidentially to the host, scanning his face as he spoke, "that they hope to pick up the Republic's navy!"

"That fellow," whispered the young man in the hostess's ear, "is a spy of Fouché's. 'Police' is written on his face, and I could swear that the stain on his chin is Paris mud. But two can play——"

As he spoke, a lady towards whom the sailor ran, with every mark of outward respect, entered the inn kitchen. "Dear mamma!" he said, "come here, I pray you. I think I have mustered some guests in your absence."

"Guests!" she answered; "what madness!"

"'Tis Mlle. de Verneuil," he replied, in a low voice.

"She perished on the scaffold after the affair at Savenay," said his mother sharply to him; "she had gone to Le Mans to rescue her brother the Prince of Loudon."

"You are mistaken, *madame*," said Corentin gently, but laying a stress on the word *madame*, "there are two

Demoiselles de Verneuil. Great houses always have several branches."

The strange lady, surprised at this familiar address, recoiled a step or two as if to survey this unexpected interlocutor; she fixed on him her black eyes full of that quick

shrewdness which comes so naturally to women, and seemed trying to find out with what object he had just testified to the existence of Mlle. de Verneuil. At the same time Corentin, who had been privately studying the lady, denied her the pleasures of maternity, while granting her those of love. He was too gallant to allow even the happiness of possessing a son twenty years old to a lady whose dazzling skin, whose arched and rich eyebrows, with eyelashes still in good condition, attracted his admiration, while her luxuriant black hair, parted in bands on her forehead, set off the

freshness of a face that showed mental power. Some faint wrinkles on the forehead, far from proclaiming age, betrayed the passions of youth, and if the piercing eyes were a little dimmed, the affection might have come either from the fatigues of travel or from a too frequent indulgence in pleasure. Lastly, Corentin noticed that the stranger was wrapped in a mantle of English stuff, and that the shape of her bonnet, apparently also foreign, did not agree with any of the fashions then called *à la Grecque*, which still ruled Parisian toilettes. Now Corentin was one of those people who are characteristically inclined to the constant suspicion of ill rather than good, and he immediately conceived doubts as to the patriotism of the two travellers. On her side, the lady, who had also and with equal swiftness taken observations of Corentin's person, turned to her son with a meaning look, which could be pretty faithfully worded, "Who is this odd fish? is he on our side?" To which unspoken question the young sailor replied with a look and gesture signifying "Faith! I know nothing at all about him, and I doubt him more than you do." Then, leaving it to his mother to guess the riddle, he turned to the hostess and said in her ear, "Try to find out who this rascal is;—whether he is really in the young lady's train, and why?"

"So," said Madame du Gua, looking at Corentin, "you are sure, citizen, that there is a Mlle. de Verneuil living?"

"She has as certain an existence in flesh and blood, *madame*, as the Citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr."

The answer had a touch of profound irony, which the lady alone understood: and anybody else would have been put out of countenance by it. Her son directed a sudden and steady gaze at Corentin, who pulled out his watch coolly, without appearing to dream of the anxiety which his answer produced. But the lady, disquieted and desirous of knowing at once whether the phrase meant mischief, or

whether it was a mere chance utterance, said to Corentin in the most natural way in the world :

"Good heavens! how unsafe the roads are! We were attacked beyond Mortagne by Chouans, and my son was nearly killed in defending me. He had two balls through his hat!"

"What, madame? you were in the coach which the brigands robbed in spite of the escort, and which has just brought us here? you ought to know the carriage then. Why, they told me as I went through Mortagne that there were two thousand Chouans present at the attack on the coach, and that every soul in it, even the passengers, had perished. This is the way people write history!"

The gossipping tone which Corentin affected, and his simple air, made him look like a frequenter of Little Provence who had learnt with sorrow the falsity of some bit of political news.

"Alas! madame," he went on, "if travellers get their throats cut so near Paris, what must be the danger of the roads in Brittany? Faith! I'll go back to Paris myself without venturing further!"

"Is Mlle. de Verneuil young and pretty?" asked the lady, struck by a sudden thought and addressing the hostess. But as she spoke the host cut short the conversation, which was almost painfully interesting to the three speakers, by announcing that breakfast was ready. The young sailor offered his hand to his mother with an affectation of familiarity. This confirmed the suspicions of Corentin, to whom he said aloud, as he made for the stair :

"Citizen, if you are in the company of Mlle. de Verneuil, and if she accepts mine host's proposal, make yourself at home."

Although these words were spoken in a cavalier fashion, and not very obligingly, Corentin went upstairs.

The young man pressed the lady's hand hard: and when the Parisian was some half dozen steps behind, he whispered, "See what inglorious risks your rash plans expose us to! if we are found out, how can we escape? and what a part you are making me play!"

The three found themselves in a pretty large room, and it did not need great experience of travel in the West to see that the innkeeper had lavished all his resources, and provided unusual luxuries for the reception of his guests. The table was laid with care, the heat of a large fire had driven out the damp; and the linen, the chairs and the covers were not intolerably dirty. Therefore Corentin could see that the host had, as the vernacular has it, turned his house inside out to please the strangers.

"That means," said he to himself, "that these people are not what they pretend. This young fellow is a keen hand: I thought he was a fool, but now I take him to be quite a match in sharpness for myself."

The young sailor, his mother, and Corentin waited for Mlle. de Verneuil, while the host went to inform her that they were ready: but the fair traveller did not make her appearance. The student of the Ecole Polytechnique, guessing that she might be making objections, left the room humming the song,

"Veillons au salut de l'empire," and went towards Mlle. de Verneuil's chamber, stimulated by a desire to conquer her scruples, and to bring her with him. Perhaps he wished merely to resolve the suspicions which disturbed him; perhaps to try upon this stranger the fascination which every man prides himself on being able to exert over a pretty woman.

"If that is a Republican," thought Corentin, as he saw him leave the room, "may I be hanged! his very shoulders move like a courtier's. And if that is his mother," continued he, looking at Madame du Gua, "I am the pope! I have got hold of some Chouans: let us make sure of what their quality is."

The door soon opened and the young sailor entered, leading by the hand Mlle. de Verneuil, whom he ushered to the table with an air self-satisfied, but full of courtesy. The hour which had passed away had not been time lost in the devil's service. With Francine's assistance Mlle. de Verneuil had arrayed herself for battle in a travelling costume more dangerous perhaps than a ball dress itself. The simplicity of it had the attractive charm, resulting from the art with which a woman, fair enough to dispense with ornaments altogether, knows how to reduce her toilette to the condition of a merely secondary charm. She wore a green dress exquisitely cut, the frogged spencer purposely showing her shape to an extent almost unbecoming in a young girl, and not concealing either her willowy waist, her elegant bust, or the grace of her movements. She entered with the agreeable smile naturally indulged in by women who can show between their rosy lips an even range of teeth as clear as porcelain, and in their cheeks a pair of dimples as fresh as those of a child. As she had laid aside the travelling wrap which had before concealed her almost entirely from the sailor's gaze, she had no difficulty in setting at work the

thousand little innocent-seeming tricks by which a woman sets off and exhibits for admiration the beauties of her face and the graceful carriage of her head. Her air and her toilette matched so well, and made her look so much younger, that Madame du Gua thought she might be going too far in giving her twenty years. So coquettish a toilette, one so evidently made with the desire of pleasing, might naturally excite the young man's hopes. But Mlle. de Verneuil merely bowed to him with a languid inclination of the head, hardly turning towards him, and seemed to drop his hand in a fashion so easy and careless, that it put him completely out of countenance. The strangers could hardly attribute this reserve either to distrust or to coquetry: it seemed rather a natural or assumed indifference: while the innocent air of the traveller's face made it impenetrable. Nor did she let any determination towards conquest appear: the pretty seductive manner which had already deceived the young sailor's self-love seemed a gift of nature. So the stranger took his own chair with something like vexation.

Mlle. de Verneuil took Francine by the hand, and addressing Madame du Gua, said in an insinuating voice, "Madame, will you be so good as to permit this maid of mine, whom I look on rather as a friend than as a servant, to eat with us? In these stormy times devoted service can only be repaid by affection. Nay, is it not all that we have left?"

Madame du Gua replied to this last phrase, pronounced in a low voice, with a half-curtsey, rather stiff in manner, and betraying her disappointment at meeting so pretty a woman. Then, leaning towards her son's ear, "Ho!" said she, "'stormy times' 'devotion' 'madame' and 'servant!' She cannot be Mlle. de Verneuil: she must be some girl sent by Fouché."

The guests were about to take their places, when Mlle.

de Verneuil's eyes fell on Corentin. He was still minutely scanning the two strangers, who appeared uncomfortable enough under his gaze.

"Citizen," she said, "I hope you are too well bred to dog my steps in this way. When the Republic sent my family to the scaffold it was not magnanimous enough to appoint a guardian over me. Although with unheard-of and chivalrous gallantry you have attached yourself to me against my will," and she heaved a sigh, "I am resolved not to allow the cares of guardianship which you lavish on me to be a cause of inconvenience to yourself. I am in safety here: you may leave me as I am."

And she darted at him a steady glance of contempt. Corentin did not fail to understand her. He checked a smile which almost curled the corners of his cunning lips, and bowed to her in the most respectful style.

"Citizeness," said he, "it will always be a happiness to me to obey you. Beauty is the only queen to whose service a true Republican may willingly submit."

As she saw him leave the room, Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes gleamed with joy so unaffected, and she directed towards Francine a meaning smile expressing so much satisfaction, that Madame du Gua, though her jealousy had made her watchful, felt inclined to discard the suspicions with which Mlle. de Verneuil's extreme beauty had inspired her. "Perhaps she is really Mlle. de Verneuil," whispered she to her son.

"And her escort?" replied the young man, whom pique inspired with prudence. "Is she a prisoner or a protégée, a friend or a foe of the government?"

Madame du Gua winked slightly, as though to say that she knew how to discover this secret. But the departure of Corentin seemed to soften the mistrust of the sailor, whose face lost its stern look. He bent on Mlle. de Verneuil

glances which rather showed an immoderate passion for women in general than the respectful ardour of dawning love. But the young lady only became more circumspect in her demeanour, and reserved her amiability for Madame du Gua. The young man, sulking by himself, endeavoured in his vexation to affect indifference in his turn. But Mlle. de Verneuil appeared not to notice his behaviour, and showed herself ingenuous but not timid, and reserved without prudery. Thus this party of apparent incompatibles showed considerable coolness one to another, producing even a certain awkwardness and constraint, destructive of the pleasure which both Mlle. de Verneuil and the young sailor had promised themselves. But women possess such a freemasonry of tact and manners, such close community of nature, and such lively desire for the indulgence of sensibility, that they are always able to break the ice on such occasions. The two fair guests, suddenly and as though by common consent, began gently to rally their solitary cavalier, and to vie with each other in jests and little attentions towards him : their agreement in so doing putting them on easy terms, so that words and looks which, while the constraint lasted, would have had some special meaning, lost their importance. In short, half an hour had not passed before the two women, already sworn foes at heart, became in appearance the best friends in the world. Yet the young sailor found himself as much vexed by Mlle. de Verneuil's ease as he had been by her reserve, and he was so chagrined that, in a fit of silent anger, he regretted having shared his breakfast with her.

" Madame," said Mlle. de Verneuil to Madame du Gua, " is your son always as grave as he is now ? "

" Mademoiselle," he replied, " I was asking myself what is the good of a fleeting happiness. The secret of my sadness lies in the vividness of my enjoyment."

"Compliments of this sort," said she, laughing, "smack rather of the court than of the Ecole Polytechnique."

"Yet he has but expressed a very natural feeling, mademoiselle," said Madame du Gua, who had her reasons for wishing to keep on terms with the stranger.

"Well, then! laugh a little," said Mlle. de Verneuil with a smile to the young man. "What do you look like when you

weep, if what you are pleased to call happiness makes you look so solemn?"

The smile, accompanied as it was by a glance of provocation, which was a little out of keeping with her air of innocence, made the young man pluck up hope. But, urged by that nature which always makes a woman go too far, or not far enough, Mlle. de Verneuil, who one moment seemed actually to take possession of the young man by a glance sparkling with all the promises of love, the next met his gallantries with cold and severe modesty—the common device under which women are wont to hide their real feelings. Once, and once only, when each thought the other's eyelids were drooping, they exchanged their real thoughts.

But they were as quick to obscure as to communicate this light, which, as it lightened their hearts, also disturbed their composure. As though ashamed of having said so much in a single glance, they dared not again look at each other. Mlle. de Verneuil, anxious to alter the stranger's opinion of her, shut herself up in cool politeness, and even seemed impatient for the end of the meal.

"You must have suffered much in prison, mademoiselle," said Madame du Gua.

"Alas! madame, it does not seem to me that I am out of prison yet."

"Then is your escort intended to guard or watch you, mademoiselle? Are you an object of affection or of suspicion to the Republic?"

Mlle. de Verneuil felt instinctively that Madame du Gua wished her little good, and was put on her guard by the question. "Madame," she answered, "I am really not myself quite sure of the nature of my relations with the Republic at this moment."

"Perhaps you inspire it with terror," said the young man half ironically.

"We had better respect mademoiselle's secrets," said Madame du Gua.

"Oh! madame, there is not much interest in the secrets of a young girl who as yet knows nothing of life save its misfortunes."

"But," answered Madame du Gua, in order to keep up a conversation which might tell her what she wished to know, "the First Consul seems to be excellently disposed. Do they not say that he is going to suspend the laws against emigrants?"

"Yes, madame," said she, with perhaps too much eagerness, "but, if so, why are Vendée and Brittany being roused to insurrection? Why set France on fire?"

This generous and apparently self-reproachful cry startled

the sailor. He gazed scrutinizingly at Mlle. de Verneuil, but could not descry any expression of enmity or the reverse on her face. Its delicate covering of bright skin told no tales, and an unconquerable curiosity helped to give a sudden increase to the interest which strong desire had already made him feel in this strange creature.

"But," she went on after a pause, "are you going to Mayenne, madame?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied the young man with an air as if to say, "What then?"

"Well, madame," continued Mlle. de Verneuil, "since your son is in the Republic's service——"

She pronounced these words with an air of outward indifference, but fixing on the two strangers one of those furtive glances of which women and diplomatists have the secret, she continued, "You must be in dread of the Chouans, and an escort is not a thing to be despised. Since we have already become as it were fellow-travellers, come with me to Mayenne."

Mother and son hesitated, and seemed to consult each other.

"It is perhaps imprudent," said the young man, "to confess that business of the greatest importance requires our presence to-night in the neighbourhood of Fougères, and that we have not yet found a conveyance: but ladies are so naturally generous, that I should be ashamed not to show confidence in you. Nevertheless," he added, "before putting ourselves into your hands we have a right to know whether we are likely to come safe out of them. Are you the mistress or the slave of your Republican escort? Excuse a young sailor's frankness, but I am unable to help seeing something rather singular in your position."

"We live in a time, sir, when nothing that occurs is not singular, so, believe me, you may accept without scruple. Above

all," added she, laying stress on her words, "you need fear no treachery in an offer made to you honestly by a person who does not identify herself with political hatreds."

"A journey so made will not lack its dangers," said he, charging his glance with a meaning which gave point to this commonplace reply.

"What more are you afraid of?" asked she, with a mocking smile, "*I* can see no danger for anyone."

"Is she who speaks the same woman who just now seemed to share my desires in a look?" said the young man to himself. "What a tone! she must be laying some trap for me."

At the very same moment the clear piercing hoot of an owl, which seemed to have perched on the chimney-top, quivered through the air like a sinister warning.

"What is that?" said Mlle. de Verneuil. "Our journey will not begin with lucky omens. But how do you get owls here that hoot in full day-time?" asked she, with an astonished look.

"It happens sometimes," said the young man coolly. "Mademoiselle," he continued, "may we not bring you bad luck? was not that your thought? Let us then not be fellow-travellers."

He said this with a quiet reticence of manner which surprised Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Sir," she said with quite aristocratic insolence, "I have not the least desire to put any constraint on you. Let us keep the very small amount of liberty which the Republic leaves us. If madame was alone I should insist——"

A soldier's heavy tread sounded in the corridor, and Commandant Hulot soon entered with a sour countenance.

"Ah! colonel, come here," said Mlle. de Verneuil, smiling and pointing to a chair near her. "Let us attend, since things will so have it, to affairs of State. But why

don't you laugh? what is the matter with you? have we Chouans here?"

But the commandant stood agape at the young stranger, whom he considered with extraordinary attention.

"Mother, will you have some more hare? Mademoiselle, you are eating nothing," said the young sailor, busying himself with his guests, to Francine.

But Hulot's surprise and Mlle. de Verneuil's attention were so unmistakably serious, that wilful misunderstanding of them would have been dangerous. So the young man went on abruptly, "What is the matter, commandant? do you happen to know me?"

"Perhaps so," answered the Republican.

"Indeed, I think I have seen you at the School."

"I never went to any school," replied as abruptly the commandant, "and what school do you come from?"

"The Ecole Polytechnique."

"Ah! yes. From the barrack where they try to hatch soldiers in dormitories," answered the commandant, whose hatred for officers who had passed through this scientific seminary was ungovernable. "But what service do you belong to?"

"The navy."

"Ah!" said Hulot, laughing sardonically, "have you

heard of many pupils of that school in the navy? It sends out," said he in a serious tone, "only officers in the artillery and the engineers."

But the young man did not blench.

"I was made an exception," said he, "because of the name I bear. All our family have been sailors."

"Ah!" said Hulot, "and what is your family name, citizen?"

"Du Gua Saint-Cyr."

"Then you were not murdered at Mortagne?"

"We had a narrow escape of it," interrupted Madame du Gua eagerly. "My son received two bullets."

"And have you got papers?" said Hulot, paying no attention to the mother.

"Perhaps you want to read them?" asked the young sailor in an impertinent tone. His sarcastic blue eyes were studying by turns the gloomy face of the commandant and Mlle. de Verneuil's countenance.

"Pray, does a young monkey like you want to make a fool of me? Your papers at once, or off with you!"

"There! there! my excellent sir, I am not a nincompoop. Need I give you any answer? Who are you?"

"The commandant of the department," replied Hulot.

"Oh then, my situation may become serious, for I shall have been taken red-handed." And he held out a glass of Bordeaux to the commandant.

"I am not thirsty," answered Hulot. "Come! your papers."

At this moment, hearing the clash of arms and the measured tread of soldiers in the street, Hulot drew near the window with an air of satisfaction which made Mlle. de Verneuil shudder. This symptom of interest encouraged the young man, whose face had become cold and proud. Dipping in his coat pocket, he drew from

it a neat pocket-book and offered the commandant some papers which Hulot read slowly, comparing the description with the appearance of the suspicious traveller. During this examination the owl's hoot began again, but this time it was easy to trace in it the tone and play of a human

voice. The commandant gave the young man back his papers with a mocking air.

"That is all very well," said he, "but you must come with me to the district office. I am not fond of music."

"Why do you take him there?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil, in an altered tone.

"Young woman," said the commandant, making his favourite grimace, "that is no business of yours."

But Mlle. de Verneuil, no less irritated at the soldier's tone than at his words, and most of all at the humiliation to which she was subjected before a man who had

taken a fancy to her, started up, and dropped at once the modest *ingénue* air which she had maintained hitherto. Her face flushed and her eyes sparkled.

"Tell me, has this young man complied with the law's demands?" she continued, not raising her voice, but with a certain quiver in it.

"Yes; in appearance," said Hulot ironically.

"Then you will be good enough to let him alone *in appearance*," said she. "Are you afraid of his escaping you? You can escort him with me to Mayenne, and he will be in the coach with his lady mother. Not a word: I will have it so. What!" she went on, seeing that Hulot was still indulging in his favourite grimace. "Do you still think him a suspect?"

"Well, yes, a little."

"What do you want to do with him?"

"Nothing but cool his head with a little lead. He is a featherbrain," said the commandant, still ironically.

"Are you joking, colonel?" cried Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Come, my fine fellow," said the commandant, nodding to the sailor, "come along!"

At this impertinence of Hulot's, Mlle. de Verneuil recovered her composure, and smiled.

"Do not stir," said she to the young man, with a dignified gesture of protection.

"What a beautiful head!" whispered he to his mother, who bent her brows.

Annoyance and a mixture of irritated but mastered feelings shed indeed fresh beauties over the fair Parisian's countenance. Francine, Madame du Gua, and her son had all risen. Mlle. de Verneuil sprang between them and the commandant, who had a smile on his face, and quickly tore open two fastenings of her spencer. Then, with a precipitate action, blinded by the passion of a woman whose self-

love has been wounded, and as greedy of the exercise of power as a child is of trying his new toy, she thrust towards Hulot an open letter.

"Read that!" she said to him with a sneer.

And she turned towards the young man, at whom, in the excitement of her victory, she darted a glance where love mingled with malicious triumph. The brows of both cleared; their faces flushed with pleasure, and their souls were filled with a thousand conflicting emotions. By a single look, Madame du Gua on her side showed that, not without reason, she set down this generous conduct of Mlle. de Verneuil's much more to love than to charity. The fair traveller at first blushed, and dropped her eyelids modestly, as she divined the meaning of this feminine expression, but in face of this kind of accusing menace she raised her head again proudly and challenged all eyes. As for the commandant, he read with stupefaction a letter bearing the full ministerial countersign, and commanding all authorities to obey this mysterious person. Then he drew his sword, broke it across his knee, and threw down the fragments.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "no doubt you know what you have to do. But a Republican has his own notions and his own pride. I am not good at obeying where pretty girls command. My resignation shall be sent in to the First Consul to-night, and you will have somebody else than Hulot to do your bidding. Where I cannot understand I stand still: especially when it is my business to understand."

There was a moment's silence, but it was soon broken by the fair Parisian, who stepped up to the commandant, held out her hand, and said:

"Colonel, though your beard is rather long, you may kiss this, for you are a man!"

"I hope so, mademoiselle," said he, depositing clumsily enough a kiss on this remarkable young woman's hand.

"As for you, my fine fellow," he added, shaking his finger at the young man, "you have had a nice escape!"

"Commandant," said the stranger, laughing, "it is time the joke should end. I will go to the district office with you if you like."

"And will you bring your invisible whistler, Marche-à-Terre, with you?"

"Who is Marche-à-Terre?" said the sailor, with every mark of unaffected surprise.

"Did not somebody whistle just now?"

"And if they did," said the stranger, "what have I to do with the whistling, if you please? I supposed that the soldiers whom you had ordered up to arrest me, no doubt were letting you know of their arrival."

"You really thought that?"

"Why, yes, egad! But why don't you drink your claret? It is very good."

Surprised at the natural astonishment of the sailor, at the extraordinary levity of his manner, at the youth of his face, which was made almost childish by his carefully curled fair hair, the commandant hovered between different suspicions. Then his glance fell on Madame du Gua, who was trying to interpret the exchange of looks between her son and Mlle. de Verneuil, and he asked her abruptly:

"Your age, citizeness?"

"Ah, sir officer! the laws of our Republic are becoming very merciless. I am thirty-eight."

"May I be shot if I believe a word of it! Marche-à-Terre is here, he whistled, and you are Chouans in disguise! God's thunder! I will have the whole inn surrounded and searched!"

At that very moment a whistle, of a broken kind, but sufficiently like that which had been heard, rose from the inn yard, and interrupted the commandant. He rushed into

the corridor—luckily enough, for it prevented him from seeing the pallor which his words had caused on Madame du Gua's cheek. But he found the whistler to be a postilion who was putting the coach horses to: and laying aside his suspicions, so absurd did it seem to him that Chouans should risk themselves in the very centre of Alençon, he came back crestfallen.

"I forgive him, but he shall dearly abye later the time he has made us pass here," whispered the mother in her son's ear, as Hulot entered the room.

The excellent officer's embarrassed countenance showed the struggle which his stern sense of duty was carrying on with his natural kindness. He still looked sulky: perhaps because he thought he had made a blunder: but he took the glass of claret, and said:

"Comrade, excuse me, but your school sends the army such boys for officers——"

"Then have the brigands officers more boyish still?" laughingly asked the sailor, as he called himself.

"For whom did you take my son?" asked Madame du Gua.

"For the Gars, the chief sent to the Chouans and the Vendéans by the London Cabinet, the man whom they call the Marquis de Montauran."

The commandant still scrutinized attentively the faces of these two suspicious persons, who gazed at each other with the peculiar looks which are natural to the self-satisfied and ignorant, and which may be interpreted by this dialogue: "Do you know what he means?" "No, do you?" "Don't know anything about it." "Then what *does* he mean? He's dreaming!" And then follows the sly jeering laugh of a fool who thinks himself triumphant.

The sudden alteration in manner of Mlle. de Verneuil, who seemed struck dumb at hearing the name of the Royalist

general, was lost on all except Francine, who alone knew the scarcely distinguishable changes of her young mistress's face. The commandant, completely driven from his position, picked up the pieces of his sword, stared at Mlle. de Verneuil, whose ebullition of feeling had found the weak place in his heart, and said to her :

" As for you, mademoiselle, I do not unsay what I have said. And to-morrow these fragments of my sword shall find their way to Bonaparte, unless——"

" And what do I care for Bonaparte, and your Republic, and the Chouans, and the King, and the Gars ?" cried she, hardly checking a display of temper which was in doubtful taste.

Either actual passion or some unknown caprice sent flashes of colour through her face, and it was easy to see that the girl would care nothing for the whole world as soon as she had fixed her affections on a single human being. But with equal suddenness she forced herself to be once more calm, when she saw that the whole audience had bent their looks on her as on some consummate actor. The commandant abruptly left the room, but Mlle. de Verneuil followed him, stopped him in the passage and asked him in a grave tone :

" Have you then really strong reasons for suspecting this young man of being the Gars ?"

"God's thunder! mademoiselle, the fellow who travels with you came to warn me that the passengers in the mail had been assassinated by the Chouans, which I knew before. But what I did not know was the name of the dead travellers. It was Du Gua Saint-Cyr."

" Oh ! if Corentin is at the bottom of it," said she with a contemptuous gesture, " I am surprised at nothing."

The commandant retired without daring to look at Mlle. de Verneuil, whose perilous beauty already made his heart beat. " Had I waited a minute longer," he said to

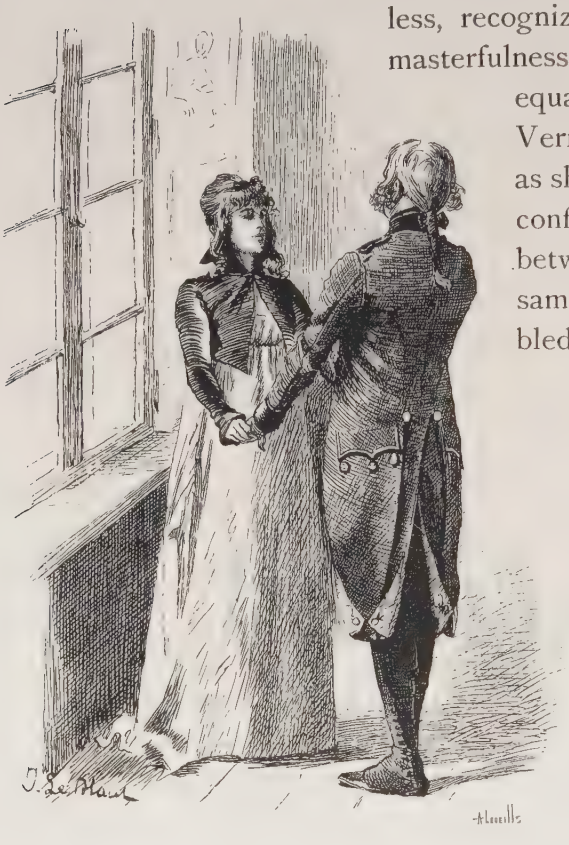
himself as he went downstairs, "I should have been fool enough to pick up my sword in order to escort her."

When she saw the young man's eyes rivetted on the door by which Mlle. de Verneuil had left the room, Madame du Gua whispered to him, "What! always the same? women will certainly be your ruin. A doll like that makes you forget everything. Why did you allow her to breakfast with us? What sort of a person is a daughter of the house of Verneuil who accepts invitations from strangers, is escorted by Blues, and disarms them with a letter which she carries like a billet-doux in her bosom? She is one of the loose women by whose aid Fouché hopes to seize you, and the letter she showed was given to her in order to command the services of the Blues against yourself!"

"But, madame," said the young man, in a tone so sharp that it cut the lady to the heart and blanched her cheeks, "her generosity gives the lie to your theory. Pray remember that we are associated by nothing save the King's business. After you have had Charette at your feet, is there another man in the world for you? Have you another purpose in life than to avenge him?"

The lady stood whelmed in thought, like a man who from the beach sees the shipwreck of his fortune and covets it only the more ardently. But as Mlle. de Verneuil re-entered the young sailor exchanged with her a smile and a glance instinct with gentle raillery. Doubtful as the future might be, short-lived as might be their intimacy, hope told none the less her flattering tale. Swift as it was, the glance could not escape the shrewdness of Madame du Gua, who understood it well. Her brow clouded lightly but immediately, and her face could not hide her jealous thoughts. Francine kept her gaze on this lady; she saw her eyes flash, her cheeks flush; she thought she could discern the countenance of one inspired by some hellish fancy, mastered by some terrible

revulsion of thought. But lightning is not swifter, nor death more sudden than was the flight of this expression: and Madame du Gua recovered her cheerfulness of look with such self-command that Francine thought she must have been under a delusion. Nevertheless, recognizing in the woman a masterfulness of spirit at least equal to that of Mlle. de Verneuil, she shuddered as she foresaw the terrible conflicts likely to occur between two minds of the same temper, and trembled as she saw Mlle. de Verneuil advance towards the young officer, casting on him a passionate and intoxicating glance, drawing him towards herself with both hands, and turning his face to the light with a gesture half coquettish and half malicious.



"Now tell me the truth," said she, trying to read it in his eyes. "You are not the Citizen Du Gua Saint-Cyr?"

"Yes, I am, mademoiselle."

"But his mother and he were killed the day before yesterday!"

"I am extremely sorry," said he, laughing, "but however that is, I am all the same your debtor in a fashion for which

I shall ever be most grateful to you, and I only wish I were in a position to prove my gratitude."

"I thought I had saved an emigrant: but I like you better as a Republican."

Yet, no sooner had these words, as if by thoughtlessness, escaped her lips, than she became confused, she blushed to her very eyes, and her whole bearing showed a deliciously naïve emotion. She dropped the officer's hands as if reluctantly, and urged, not by any shame at having clasped them, but by some impulse which was too much for her heart, she left him intoxicated with hope. Then she seemed suddenly to reproach herself with this freedom, authorized though it might seem to be by their passing adventures of travel, resumed a conventional behaviour, bowed to her two fellow-travellers, and, disappearing with Francine, sought their apartment. As they reached it, Francine entwined her fingers, turned the palms of her hands upwards with a twist of the arms, and said, gazing at her mistress:

"Ah! Marie, how much has happened in a little time! Who but you would have adventures of this kind?"

Mlle. de Verneuil threw herself with a bound on Francine's neck. "Ah!" said she, "this is life! I am in heaven!"

"In hell, it may be," said Francine.

"Oh! hell if you like," said Mlle. de Verneuil merrily. "Here, give me your hand. Feel my heart how it beats. I am in a fever. I care nothing for the whole world. How often have I seen that man in my dreams! What a beautiful head he has! what a flashing eye!"

"Will he love you?" asked the simple, straightforward peasant girl, in a lowered tone, her face dashed with sadness.

"Can you ask such a question?" said Mlle. de Verneuil. "But tell me, Francine," she added, assuming an air half serious and half comic, "is he so *very* hard to please?"

"Yes, but will he love you always?" replied Francine, with a smile.

Both girls looked at each other for a time surprised, Francine at showing so much knowledge of life, Marie at perceiving for the first time a promise of happiness in an amorous adventure. So she remained silent, like one who leans over a precipice, the depth of which he would gauge by waiting for the thud of a pebble that he has cast in carelessly enough at first.

"Ah! that is my business," said she, with the gesture of a gambler who plays his last stake. "I have no pity for a forsaken woman; she has only herself to blame if she is deserted. I have no fear of keeping, dead or alive, the man whose heart has once belonged to me. But," she added after a moment's silence, and in a tone of surprise, "how do you come to be so knowing as this, Francine?"

"Mademoiselle," said the young girl eagerly, "I hear steps in the passage."

"Ah," said she, listening, "it is not *he*; but," she continued, "that is your answer, is it? I understand. I will wait for your secret, or guess it."

Francine was right. The conversation was interrupted by three taps at the door: and Captain Merle, on hearing the "Come in!" which Mlle. de Verneuil addressed to him, quickly entered. The captain made a soldierly bow to the lady, venturing to throw a glance at her at the same time, and was so dazzled by her beauty that he could find nothing to say to her but "Mademoiselle, I am at your orders."

"Have you become my guardian in virtue of the resignation of the chief of your demi-brigade? That is what they call your regiment, is it not?"

"My superior officer is Adjutant-Major Gérard, by whose orders I come."

"Is your commandant then so much afraid of me?" asked she.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, Hulot fears nothing: but you see, ladies are not exactly in his way, and it vexed him to find his general wearing a kerchief."

"Yet," retorted Mlle. de Verneuil, "it was his duty to obey his chiefs. I like obedience, I warn you, and I will not have people resist me."

"That would be difficult," answered Merle.

"Let us take counsel together," said Mlle. de Verneuil. "You have some fresh men here. They shall escort me to Mayenne, which I can reach this evening. Can we find other troops there so as to go on without stopping? The Chouans know nothing of our little expedition; and by travelling thus at night we shall have very bad luck indeed if we find them in numbers strong enough to attack us. Come, tell me; do you think this feasible?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"What sort of a road is it from Mayenne to Fougères?"

"A rough one; the going is all up and down: a regular squirrel's country."

"Let us be off, then," said she; "and as there is no danger in going out of Alençon, you set out first. We shall easily catch you up."

"One would think she was an officer of ten years' standing," said Merle to himself, as he went out. "Hulot is wrong. The girl is not one of those who draw their rents from down feathers. Odds cartridges! If Captain Merle wishes to become an adjutant-major, he had better not mistake St. Michael for the devil."

While Mlle. de Verneuil was conferring with the captain, Francine had left the room, intending to examine through a passage window a certain spot in the courtyard, whither, from the moment she had entered the inn, an irresistible

curiosity had attracted her. She gazed at the straw in the stable with such profound attention that you might have thought her deep in prayer before a statue of the Virgin.

Very soon she perceived Madame du Gua making her way towards Marche-à-Terre as carefully as a cat afraid of wetting her paws. The Chouan no sooner saw the lady than he rose and observed towards her an attitude of the deepest respect,—a singular circumstance, which roused Francine's curiosity still more. She darted into the yard, stole along the wall so as not to be seen by Madame du Gua, and tried to hide herself behind the stable door. By stepping on tiptoe, holding her breath, and avoiding the slightest noise, she succeeded in posting herself close to Marche-à-Terre without exciting his attention.

"And if," said the strange lady to the Chouan, "after all these inquiries, you find that it is not her name, shoot her without mercy, as you would a mad dog."

"I understand," said Marche-à-Terre.

The lady retired, and the Chouan replacing his red woollen cap on his head, remained standing, and was scratching his ear after the fashion of puzzled men, when he saw Francine stand before him, as if by enchantment.

"Saint Anne of Auray!" cried he, suddenly dropping his whip, folding his hands, and remaining in a state of ecstasy. His coarse face was tinged with a slight flush, and his eyes flashed like diamonds lost in the mud.

"Is it really Cottin's wench?" he said, in a low voice, that none but himself could hear. "Ah, but you are brave!" (*godaine*), said he, after a pause. This odd word *godain*, or *godaine*, is part of the patois of the district, and supplies lovers with a superlative to express the conjunction of beauty and finery.

"I should be afraid to touch you," added Marche-à-Terre, who nevertheless advanced his broad hand towards Francine, as if to make sure of the weight of a thick gold chain which surrounded her neck and fell down to her waist.

"You had better not, Pierre," answered Francine, inspired by the feminine instinct which makes a woman tyrannize whenever she is not tyrannized over.

She stepped haughtily back, after enjoying the Chouan's surprise. But she made up for the harshness of her words by a look full of kindness, and drew near to him again.

"Pierre," said she, "that lady was talking to you[1] of my young mistress, was she not?"

Marche-à-Terre stood dumb, with a struggle going on in his face like that at dawn between light and darkness. He gazed by turns at Francine, at the great whip which he had let fall, and at the gold chain which seemed to exercise over him a fascination not less than that of the Breton girl's face. Then, as if to put an end to his own disquiet, he picked up his whip, but said no word.

[1] Marche-à-Terre, in his awe at Francine's finery, and she, in her desire to play the lady, have used *vous*, which the original italicizes. Both adopt the familiar *tu* henceforth. But the second person singular is so awkward in ordinary English, that it seems better adjusted, with this warning, to the common use.—*Translator's Note.*

"Oh!" said Francine, who knew his inviolable fidelity, and wished to dispel his suspicions, "it is not hard to guess that this lady bade you kill my mistress."

Marche-à-Terre dropped his head in a significant manner, which was answer enough for "Cottin's wench."

"Well, Pierre, if the least harm happens to her, if a hair of her head is injured, we have looked our last at one another here for time and for eternity! I shall be in Paradise then, and you in hell!"

No demoniac just about to undergo exorcism in form by the church was ever more agitated than Marche-à-Terre by this prediction, pronounced with a confidence which gave it a sort of certainty. The expression of his eyes, charged at first with a savage tenderness, then struck by a fanatical sense of duty as imperious as love itself, turned to ferocity, as he perceived the masterful air of the innocent girl who had once been his love. But Francine interpreted the Chouan's silence in her own fashion.

"You will do nothing for me, then?" she said, in a reproachful tone.

At these words, the Chouan cast on his mistress a glance as black as a raven's wing.

"Are you your own mistress?" growled he, in a tone that Francine alone could understand.

"Should I be where I am?" said she indignantly. "But what are *you* doing here? You are still *Chouanning*, you are prowling along the highways like a mad animal trying to bite. Oh, Pierre! if you were sensible you would come with me. This pretty young lady (who, I should tell you, was brought up at our house at home,) has taken care of me. I have two hundred good livres a year. Mademoiselle has bought me Uncle Thomas's great house for five hundred crowns, and I have two thousand livres saved from my wages."

But her smile and the list of her riches made no impression on Marche-à-Terre's stolid air. "The rectors have given the word for war," said he; "every Blue we lay low is good for an indulgence."

"But perhaps the Blues will kill you!"

His only answer was to let his arms drop by his sides, as if to apologize for the smallness of his offering to God and the King.

"And what would become of me?" asked the young girl sorrowfully.

Marche-à-Terre gazed at Francine as if stupefied: his eyes grew in size, and there dropped from them two tears, which trickled in parallel lines down his hairy cheeks on to his goatskin raiment, while a dull groan came from his breast.

"Saint Anne of Auray! Pierre, is this all you have to say to me after seven years' parting? How you have changed!"

"I love you still and always," answered the Chouan roughly.

"No," she whispered, "the King comes before me."

"If you look at me like that," he said, "I must go."

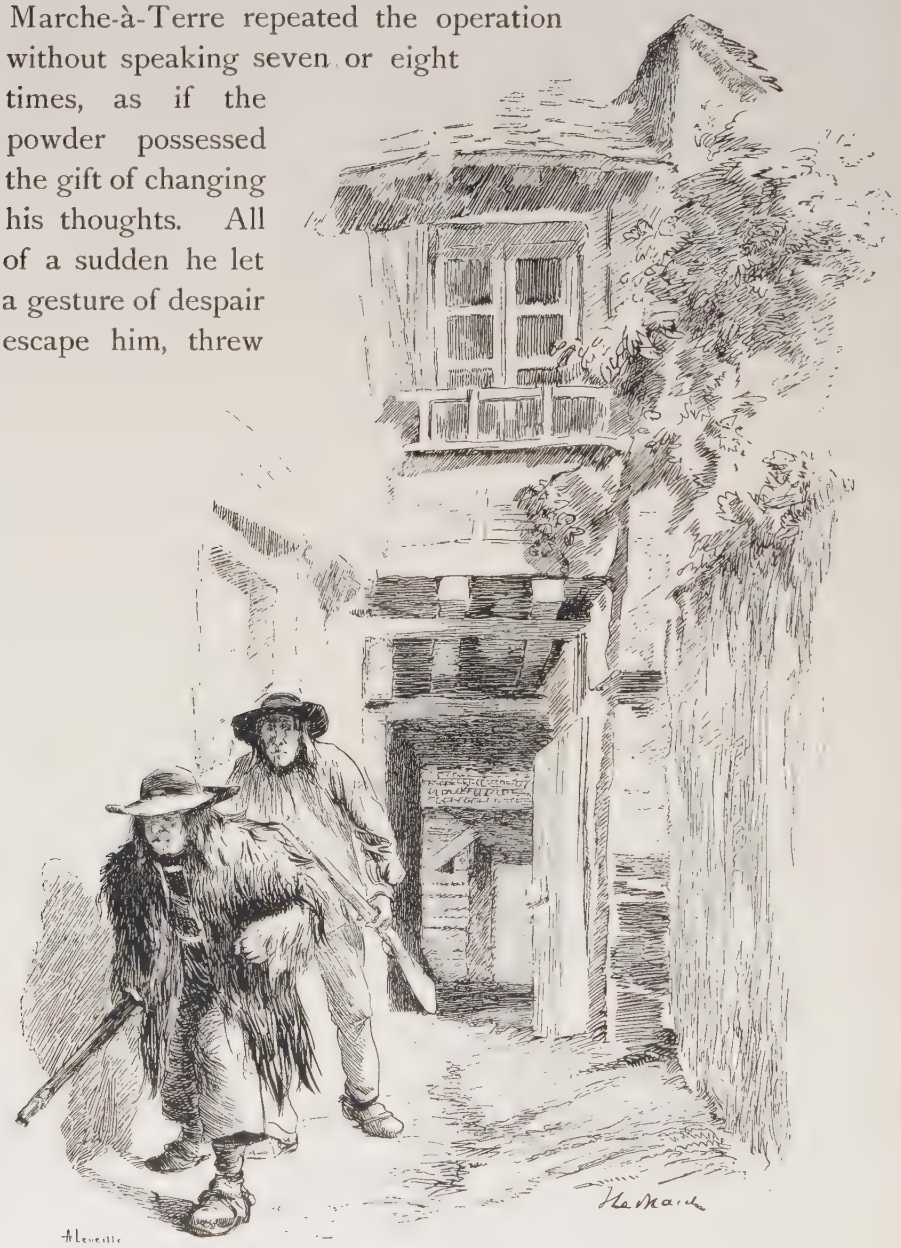
"Good-bye! then," she said sadly.

"Good-bye!" repeated March-à-Terre. He seized Francine's hand, squeezed it, kissed it, crossed himself, and plunged into the stable like a dog that has just stolen a bone.

"Pille-Miche," said he to his comrade, "I cannot see my way. Have you got your snuff-mull?"

"Oh! *cré bleu* . . . what a fine chain!" answered Pille-Miche, groping in a pocket under his goatskin. Then he held out to Marche-à-Terre one of the little conical horn boxes in which Bretons put the finely powdered tobacco which they grind for themselves during the long winter evenings. The Chouan raised his thumb so as to make in his left hand the

hollow wherein old soldiers measure their pinches of snuff, and shook the mull (whose tip Pille-Miche had screwed off) hard. An impalpable powder fell slowly through the little hole at the point of this Breton implement. Marche-à-Terre repeated the operation without speaking seven or eight times, as if the powder possessed the gift of changing his thoughts. All of a sudden he let a gesture of despair escape him, threw



the mull to Pille-Miche, and picked up a rifle hidden in the straw.

"It is no good taking seven or eight pinches like that right off," said the miserly Pille-Miche.

"Forward!" cried Marche-à-Terre hoarsely. "There is work to do." And some thirty Chouans who were sleeping under the mangers and in the straw, lifted their heads, saw Marche-à-Terre standing, and promptly disappeared by a door opening on to gardens, whence the fields could be reached.

When Francine left the stables, she found the coach ready to start. Mlle. de Verneuil and her two fellow-travellers had already got in, and the Breton girl shuddered as she saw her mistress facing the horses, by the side of the woman who had just given orders for her death. The "suspect" placed himself opposite to Marie: and as soon as Francine had taken her place, the heavy vehicle set off at a smart trot.

The sun had already dispelled the grey mists of an autumn morning: and its rays gave to the melancholy fields a certain lively air of holiday youth. It is the wont of lovers to take these atmospheric changes as omens: but the silence which for some time prevailed among the travellers struck Francine as singular. Mlle. de Verneuil had recovered her air of indifference, and sat with lowered eyes, her head slightly leaning to one side, and her hands hidden in a kind of mantle which she had put on. If she raised her eyes at all it was to view the landscape which, shifting rapidly, flitted past them. Entertaining no doubt of admiration, she seemed wilfully to refuse opportunity for it: but her apparent nonchalance indicated coquetry rather than innocence. The touching purity which gives so sweet an accord to the varying expressions in which tender and weak souls reveal themselves, seemed powerless to lend its charm to a being

whose strong feelings destined her as the prey of stormy passion. Full, on his side, of the joy which the beginning of a flirtation gives, the stranger did not as yet trouble himself with endeavouring to harmonize the discord that existed between the coquetry and the sincere enthusiasm of this strange girl. It was enough for him that her feigned innocence permitted him to gaze at will on a face as beautiful in its calm, as it had just been in its agitation. We are not prone to quarrel with that which gives us delight.

It is not easy for a pretty woman in a carriage to withdraw from the gaze of her companions, whose eyes are fixed on her as if seeking an additional pastime to beguile the tedium of travel. Therefore, congratulating himself on being able to satisfy the hunger of his rising passion without its being possible for the strange lady either to avoid his eyes or be offended at their persistence, the young officer studied to his heart's content, and as if he had been examining a picture, the pure and dazzling lines of her face. Now the day brought out the pink transparence of the nostrils and the double curve which formed a junction between the nose and the upper lip. Now a paler sunbeam played on the tints of the complexion—pearly-white under the eyes and round the mouth, roseate on the cheeks, creamy towards the temples and on the neck. He admired the contrasts of light and shade produced by the hair which surrounded the face with its raven tresses, giving it a fresh and passing grace; for with woman everything is fugitive. Her beauty of to-day is often not that of yesterday, and it is lucky for her, perhaps, that it is so. Thus the self-styled sailor, still in that age when man enjoys the nothings that make up the whole of love, watched delightedly the successive movements of the eyelids and the ravishing play which each breath gave to the bosom. Sometimes, his will and his thoughts in unison, he spied a harmony between the

expression of the eyes and the faint movements of the lips. Each gesture showed him a new soul, each movement a new facet in this young girl. If a thought disturbed her mobile features, if a sudden flush passed over them, if they were illumined by a smile, his delight in endeavouring to guess the mysterious lady's secrets was infinite. The whole of her was a trap for soul and sense at once, and their silence, far from raising a barrier between the exchange of their hearts, gave their thoughts common ground. More than one glance in which her eyes met the stranger's told Marie de Verneuil that this silence might become compromising: and she accordingly put to Madame du Gua some of the trivial questions which start a conversation, though she could not keep the son out of her talk with the mother.

"How, madame," said she, "could you make up your mind to send your son into the navy? is not this a sentence of perpetual anxiety on yourself?"

"Mademoiselle, it is the lot of women—I mean of mothers—to tremble always for their dearest treasures."

"Your son is very like you!"

"Do you think so, mademoiselle?"

This unconscious endorsement of the age which Madame du Gua had assigned to herself, made the young man smile, and inspired his so-called mother with fresh annoyance. Her hatred grew at every fresh glance of love which her son threw at Marie. Whether they spoke or were silent, everything kindled in her a hideous rage, disguised under the most insinuating manners.

"Mademoiselle," said the stranger, "you are wrong. Sailors are not more exposed to danger than other warriors. Indeed there is no reason for women to hate the navy: for have we not over the land services the immense advantage of remaining faithful to our mistresses?"

"Yes: because you cannot help it," replied Mlle. de Verneuil, laughing.

"It is a kind of faithfulness, all the same," said Madame du Gua in a tone which was almost sombre.

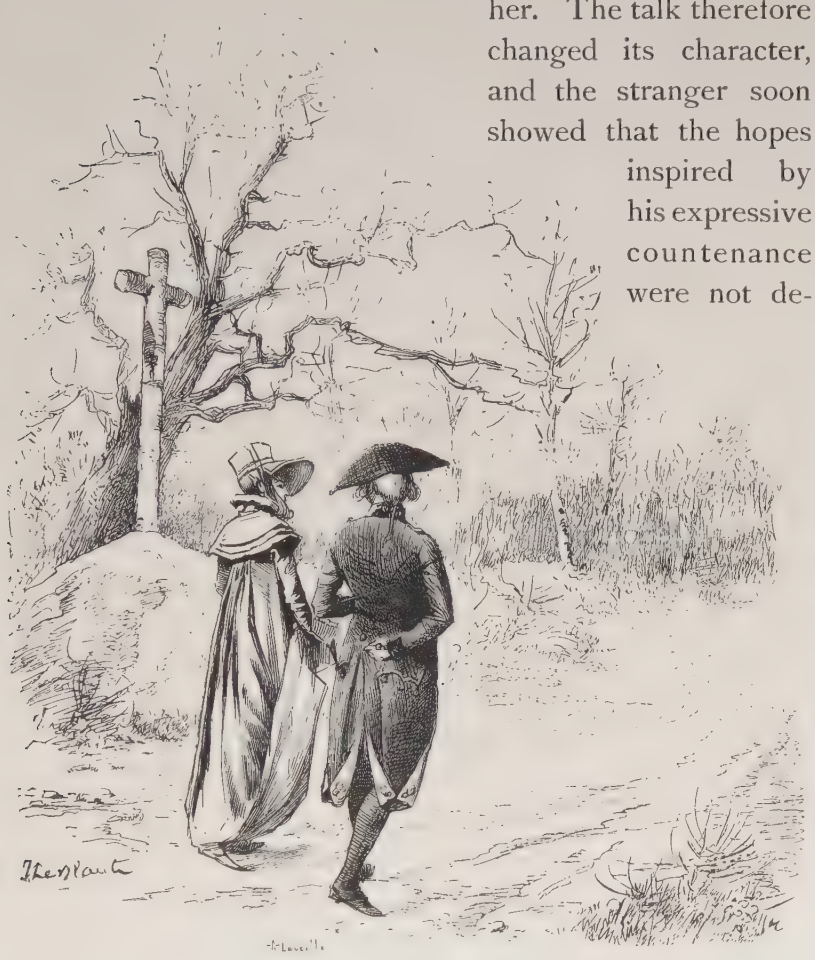
But the conversation became livelier, and occupied itself with subjects of no interest to any but the three travellers. For in such a situation persons of intelligence are able to give a fresh meaning to mere commonplaces. But the talk, frivolous as it seemed, which these strangers chose to interchange, hid the desires, the passions, the hopes which animated them. Marie's constantly wide-awake subtlety and her aggressive wit taught Madame du Gua that only slander and false dealing could give her advantage over a rival as redoubtable in intellect as in beauty. But the travellers now caught up their escort and their vehicle began to move less rapidly. The young sailor saw in front a long stretch of ascent, and suggested to Mlle. de Verneuil that she should get out and walk. His good manners and attentive politeness apparently had their effect on the fair Parisian, and he felt her consent as a compliment.

"Is madame of our mind?" asked she of Madame du Gua. "Will she join our walk?"

"Coquette!" said the lady as she alighted.

Marie and the stranger walked together, but with an interval between them. The sailor, already a prey to tyrannous desire, was eager to dispel the reserve which she showed towards him, and the nature of which he did not fail to see. He thought to do so by jesting with the fair stranger under cover of that old French gaiety—that spirit, now frivolous, now grave, but always chivalrous, though often mocking—which was the note of the more distinguished men among the exiled aristocracy. But the lively Parisian girl rallied the young Republican so maliciously, and contrived to insinuate such a contemptuous expression

of reproach for his attempts at frivolity, while showing a marked preference for the bold and enthusiastic ideas which in spite of himself shone through his discourse, that he could not miss the way to win her. The talk therefore changed its character, and the stranger soon showed that the hopes inspired by his expressive countenance were not de-



lusive. Each moment he found new difficulties in comprehending the siren with whom he fell more and more in love, and was obliged to suspend his judgment in reference to a girl who seemed to amuse herself by contradicting each opinion that he formed of her. Enticed at first by the

contemplation of her physical beauty, he felt himself now attracted towards her unknown mind by a curiosity which Marie took pleasure in kindling. The conversation little by little assumed a character of intimacy very foreign to the air of indifference which Mlle. de Verneuil tried unsuccessfully to infuse into it. Although Madame du Gua had followed the lovers, they had unconsciously walked quicker than she did: and were soon some hundred paces ahead. The handsome couple trod the fine gravel of the road, delighted like children in keeping step as their paces sounded lightly, happy in the rays of light which wrapped them as in spring sunshine, and in breathing together the autumnal perfume, so rich in vegetable spoils that it seemed a food brought by the winds to nourish the melancholy of young love.[1] Although both agreed in seeming to see nothing but an ordinary chance in their momentary connection, the heavens, the scene, and the season gave their emotion a touch of seriousness which had the air of passion. They began to praise the beauty of the day: then they talked of their strange meeting, of the approaching breach of so pleasant an acquaintance, of the ease with which one becomes intimate while travelling with people who are lost to sight almost as soon as seen. After this remark the young man availed himself of the unspoken leave which seemed to be granted him to edge in some tender confidences, and endeavoured to risk a declaration in the style of a man accustomed to the situation.

"Have you noticed, mademoiselle," said he, "how little feeling cares to keep in the beaten track during these terrible times of ours? Are not all our circumstances full of surprise and of the inexplicable? We men of to-day love, we hate, on the strength of a single glance. At one moment we are

[1] This I fear is what Balzac's own countrymen would call *galimatias*. But it is what Balzac wrote.—*Translator's Note.*

united for life, at another we part with the swiftness of those who march to death. We are always in a hurry, like the nation itself in its tumults. In the midst of danger men join hands more quickly than in the jog-trot of ordinary life, and in these latter days at Paris all have known, as if on a battle-field, what a single hand-clasp can tell."

"Men felt the need of living hard and fast," she answered, "because there was but a short time to live." And then, glancing at her young companion in a way which seemed to foretell the end of their brief journey, she said, a little maliciously: "For a young man who is just leaving the School, you are well up in the affairs of life."

"What do you really think of me?" said he, after a moment's silence. "Tell me your opinion without sparing."

"I suppose you wish to purchase the right of giving me yours of me?" she replied, laughing.

"That is no answer," said he, after a brief pause. "Take care! Silence itself is often a reply."

"But have I not guessed everything you meant to say to me? You have said too much as it is."

"Oh! if we understand each other," said he, with a laugh, "you have given me more than I dared hope."

She smiled so graciously that it seemed as if she accepted the courteous challenge with which all men love to threaten a woman. So they took it for granted, half seriously, half in jest, that they never could be to each other anything else than that which they were at the moment. The young man might abandon himself if he liked to a hopeless passion, and Marie might mock it. So, having thus erected between them an imaginary barrier, they appeared both eager to profit by the rash licence for which they had bargained. Suddenly Marie struck her foot against a stone, and stumbled.

"Take my arm," said the stranger.

"I must needs do so, you giddy-pate," said she. "You

would be too proud if I refused. I should seem to be afraid of you."

"Ah! mademoiselle," answered he, pressing her arm that she might feel the beating of his heart, "you will make me proud of this favour."

"Well, the ease with which I consent will dispel your illusions."

"Would you protect me already against the danger of the feelings which you yourself inspire?"

"Pray leave off trying to entangle me," said she, "in these little boudoir fancies, these word-puzzles of my lady's chamber. I do not like to see in a man of your character the kind of wit that fools can have. See! we are under a lovely sky, in the open country; before us, above us, all is grand. You mean to tell me that I am beautiful, do you not? Your eyes have told me that already, and besides, I know it. Nor am I a woman who is flattered by compliments. Would you perchance talk to me of your *feelings?*" she said, with an ironic stress on the word. "Do you think me silly enough to believe in a sudden sympathy strong enough to throw over a whole life the masterful memory of a single morning?"

"Not of a morning," answered he, "but of a beautiful woman who has shown herself a generous one as well."

"You forget," she rejoined, with a laugh, "attractions greater than these. I am a stranger to you, and my name, my quality, my position, my self-possession in mind and manners—all must seem extraordinary to you."

"You are no stranger to me," cried he; "I have divined you already, and I would have nothing added to your perfections except a little more faith in the love which you inspire at first sight!"

"Ah! my poor boy of seventeen, you talk of *love* already?" said she, smiling. "Well, so be it. . . . 'Tis a topic of conver-

sation between man and woman, like the weather at a morning call. So let us take it. You will find in me no false modesty and no littleness of mind. I can listen to the word 'love' without blushing. It has been said to me so often with no heart-accent in it, that it has become almost meaningless. I have heard it in theatres, in books, in society, everywhere. But I have never met anything which corresponded in fact to the magnificent sentiments which it implies."

"Have you tried to find it?"

"Yes."

The word was said with such unreserve that the young man started and stared at Marie as if he had changed his mind suddenly as to her character and station.

"Mademoiselle," said he, with ill-concealed emotion, "are you a girl or a woman, an angel or a fiend?"

"I am both," replied she, laughing. "Is there not always something angelic and something diabolic as well in a young girl who has never loved, who does not love, and who perhaps will never love?"

"And yet you are happy?" said he, with a greater freedom of tone and manner, as if he already thought less respectfully of her who had delivered him.

"Oh!" she said. "Happy? No! When I meditate by myself, and feel myself mastered by the social conventions which make me artificial, I envy the privileges of men. But when I reflect on all the means which nature has given us to surround you, to wrap you in the meshes of an invisible power which none of you can resist, then my part in this comedy here below looks more promising to me. And then again it seems to me wretched, and I feel that I should despise a man if he were the dupe of ordinary allurements. To be brief, at one time I see the yoke we bear, and it pleases me, then it seems horrible, and I revolt. At another I feel that

aspiration of self-sacrifice which makes woman so fair and noble a thing, only to experience afterwards a devouring desire of power. Perhaps it is but the natural fight of the good and evil principle which makes up the life of all creatures that on earth do dwell. Both angel and fiend—you have said it! It is not to-day that I came to know my double nature. Yet we women know our weakness better than you do. Do we not possess an instinct which makes us look in everything towards a perfection too certainly impossible of attainment? But," she added with a sigh, and a glance towards heaven, "what ennobles us in our own eyes——"

"Is what?" said he.

"Why," said she, "that we all of us, more or less, maintain the struggle against our fated incompleteness."

"Mademoiselle, why should we part to-night?"

"Ah!" she said, with a smile at the fiery glance which the young man darted on her, "we had better get into the carriage, the open air is not good for us."

Marie turned sharply on her heel, and the stranger followed, pressing her arm with a vigour which was hardly respectful, but which expressed at once adoration and tyrannous desire. She quickened her steps: the sailor perceived that she wished to avoid a perhaps inopportune declaration, but

this only increased his fervour, and setting all to the touch in order to gain a first favour from the girl, he said to her with an arch look :

"Shall I tell you a secret ?"

"Tell it at once if it concerns yourself."

"I am not in the service of the Republic. Whither are you going ? I will go too."

As he spoke, Marie trembled violently, drew her arm from his, and covered her face with both hands to veil, it might be a flush, it might be a pallor, which changed her appearance. But she uncovered it almost immediately, and said in a tender tone :

"You have begun then, as you would have finished, by deceiving me ?"

"Yes," he said.

At this answer she turned her back on the bulky vehicle towards which they were advancing, and began almost to run in the opposite direction.

"But," said the stranger, "just now the air did not agree with you!"

"Oh! it has changed," said she gravely, and still walking on, a prey to stormy thoughts.

"You are silent," asked the stranger, whose heart was full of the sweet flutter of apprehension which the expectation of pleasure brings with it.

"Oh!" she said shortly, "the tragedy has been prompt enough in beginning."

"What tragedy do you mean ?" asked he.

She stopped and scanned the cadet from head to foot, with an expression compact of fear and interest both : then she hid the feelings which agitated her under an air of profound calm, showing that, for a young girl, she had no small experience of life.

"Who are you ?" she said. "But I know. When I saw

you, I suspected it. You are the Royalist chief they call the Gars. The ex-Bishop of Autun is right in telling us always to believe in presentiments of evil."

"What concern have you in knowing that person?"

"What concern could he have in hiding himself from me, who have already saved his life?"

She spoke with a forced laugh, and went on, "It was prudent of me to hinder your declaration of love. Know, sir, that I hate you! I am a Republican, you a Royalist: and I would give you up if my word were not pledged to you, if I had not already saved you once, and if——"

She stopped. This violent flux and reflux of thought, this struggle which she cared no longer to hide, gave the stranger some uneasiness, and he tried, but in vain, to sound her intention.

"Let us part at once. I will have it so. Good-bye!" she said, and turning abruptly, she made a step or two; but then came back.

"No!" she continued, "my interest in learning who you are is too great. Hide nothing from me, and tell me the truth. Who are you? For are you just as much a cadet of the School as you are a boy of seventeen——"

"I am a sailor, ready to quit the sea, and follow you whithersoever your fancy guides me. If I am fortunate enough to excite your curiosity by anything mysterious about me, I shall take good care not to put an end to it. What is the good of mixing up the serious concerns of everyday life with the life of the heart in which we were beginning to understand each other so well?"

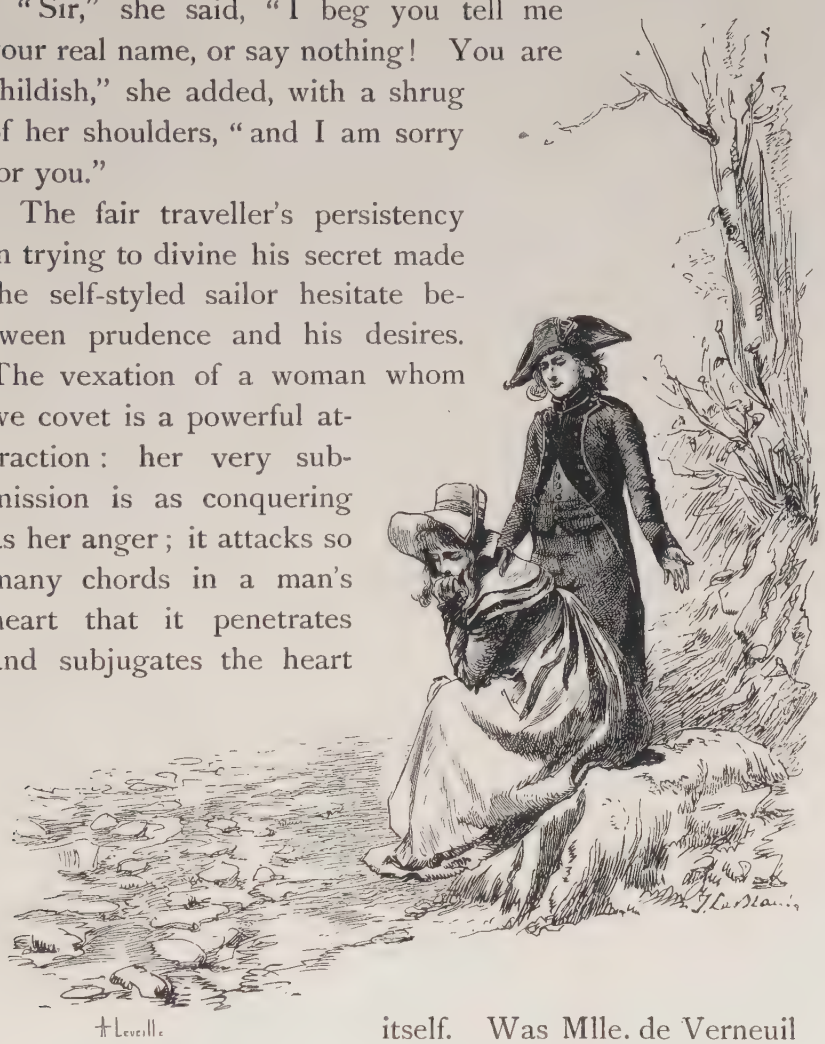
"Our souls *might* have understood each other," she said gravely. "But, sir, I have no right to claim your confidence. You will never know the extent of your obligations to me: and I shall hold my peace."

They walked some distance without uttering a word.

"You seem to take a great interest in my life," said the stranger.

"Sir," she said, "I beg you tell me your real name, or say nothing! You are childish," she added, with a shrug of her shoulders, "and I am sorry for you."

The fair traveller's persistency in trying to divine his secret made the self-styled sailor hesitate between prudence and his desires. The vexation of a woman whom we covet is a powerful attraction: her very submission is as conquering as her anger; it attacks so many chords in a man's heart that it penetrates and subjugates the heart itself. Was Mlle. de Verneuil merely trying a fresh trick of coquetry? In spite of his passion, the stranger had self-command enough to be mistrustful of a woman who was so desperately set on tearing from him a secret of life and death.



"Why," he said, taking her hand, which she let him take

in absence of mind, "why has my indiscretion, which seemed to give a future to this day, destroyed its charm instead?" But Mlle. de Verneuil, who seemed in distress, was silent. "How have I hurt you?" he went on, "and how can I soothe you?"

"Tell me your name."

Then the two walked in silence, and they made some progress thus. Suddenly Mlle. de Verneuil halted, like a person who has made up her mind on a point of importance:

"Marquis of Montauran," said she with dignity, and yet not quite successfully disguising an agitation that made her features quiver nervously, "whatever it may cost me, I am happy to be able to do you a service. We must part here. The escort and the coach are too necessary to your safety for you to refuse either one or the other. Fear nothing from the Republicans: all these soldiers, look you, are men of honour, and the adjutant will faithfully execute the orders which I am about to give him. For my part, I can easily regain Alençon with my maid: some soldiers will accompany us. Heed me well, for your life is at stake. If before you are in safety you meet the hideous dandy whom you saw at the inn, fly, for he will give you up at once. For me——" She paused. "For me, I plunge back with pride into the petty cares of life." And then she went on in a low voice, and choking back her tears, "Good-bye, sir! May you be happy! Good-bye!" And she beckoned to Captain Merle, who was just reaching the brow of the hill. The young man was not prepared for so sudden an ending. "Wait!" he cried, with a kind of despair, cleverly enough feigned. The girl's strange whim surprised the stranger so much that, though he would at the moment have laid down his life for her, he devised a most reprehensible trick in order at once to hide his name and to satisfy Mlle. de Verneuil's curiosity.

"You have nearly guessed it," he said. "I am an emigrant, under sentence of death, and I am called the Vicomte de Bauvan. Love of my country has brought me back to France, to my brother's side. I hope to have my name erased from the list by the aid of Madame de Beauharnais, now the First Consul's wife: but if I do not succeed in this, then I will die on my natal soil, fighting by the side of my friend Montauran. My first object is to go and see, with the aid of a passport which he has given me, whether any of my estates in Brittany remain to me."

As the young noble spoke, Mlle. de Verneuil examined him with her keen eye. She tried to doubt the truth of his words: but, lulled into credulous confidence, she slowly regained her serene expression, and cried, "Sir! is what you are telling me true?"

"Perfectly true," replied the stranger, whose standard of honour in dealing with women did not appear to be high.

Mlle. de Verneuil drew a deep sigh like one who comes back to life.

"Ah!" cried she, "I am quite happy."

"Then do you hate my poor Montauran very much?"

"No," said she. "You cannot understand me. I could not wish *you* to be exposed to dangers, against which I will try to defend *him*, since he is your friend."

"Who told you that Montauran is in danger?"

"Why, sir, even if I did not come from Paris, where everyone is talking of his enterprise, the commandant at Alençon said enough to us about him, I should think."

"Then I must ask you how you can preserve him from danger?"

"And suppose I do not choose to answer?" said she, with the air of disdain under which women know so well how to conceal their emotions. "What right have you to know my secrets?"

"The right which belongs to a man who loves you."

"What, already?" she said. "No, sir, you do not love me. You see in me an object of passing gallantry, that is all. Did I not understand you at once? Could anyone who has been accustomed to good society make a mistake, in the present state of manners, when she heard a cadet of the Ecole Polytechnique pick his words, and disguise, as clumsily as you did, the breeding of a gentleman under a Republican outside? Why, your very hair has a trace of powder, and there is an atmosphere of gentility about you which any woman of fashion must perceive at once. Therefore, trembling lest my overseer, who is as sharp as a woman, should recognize you, I dismissed him at once. Sir, a real Republican officer, who had just left the Ecole Polytechnique, would not fancy himself about to make a conquest of me, or take me for a pretty adventuress. Permit me, M. de Bauvan, to lay before you some slight considerations of woman's wit on this point. Are you so young as not to know that of all creatures of our sex the most difficult to conquer is she whose price is quoted in the market, and who is already weary of pleasure? Such a woman, they say, requires immense efforts to win her, and yields only to her own caprices. To try to excite affection in her is the *ne plus ultra* of coxcombry. Putting aside this class of women, with whom you are gallant enough (since they are all bound to be beautiful) to rank me, do you not understand that a girl, young, well-born, beautiful, witty (you allow me all these gifts), is not for sale, and can be won only in one way—by loving her? You understand me? If she loves and chooses to stoop to folly, she must at least have some greatness of feeling to excuse her. Pardon me this lavishness of logic, so rare with those of our sex. But for the sake of your happiness, and," she added, with a bow, "of mine, I would not have either of us deceived as to the other's real worth, nor would I

have you think Mademoiselle de Verneuil, be she angel or fiend, woman or girl, capable of being caught with commonplace gallantries."

"Mademoiselle," said the pretended viscount, whose surprise, though he concealed it, was immense, and who at once became a man of the finest manners, "I beg you to believe that I take you for a very noble person, great of heart, and full of lofty sentiments, or for a kind girl, just as you choose."

"That is more than I ask for, sir," she said, laughing. "Leave me my incognito. Besides, I wear my mask better than you do, and it pleases me to keep it on, were it only for the purpose of knowing whether people who talk to me of love are sincere. . . . Therefore, do not play too bold strokes with me. Listen, sir," she added, grasping his arm firmly, "if you could convince me that you love me truly, no power on earth should tear us asunder. Yes! I would gladly throw in my lot with some man's great career, wed with some huge ambition, share some high thoughts. Noble hearts are not inconstant, for fidelity is one of their strong points. I should be loved always, always happy. But I should not be always ready to make myself a ladder whereon my beloved might mount, to sacrifice myself for him, to bear all from him, to love him always, even when he had ceased to love me. I have never yet dared to confide to another heart the wishes of my own, the passionate enthusiasm which consumes me: but I may say something of the sort to you, since we shall part as soon as you are in safety."

"Part? Never!" he cried, electrified by the speech of this energetic soul, that seemed wrestling with mighty thoughts.

"Are you your own master?" replied she, with a disdainful glance, which brought him to his level.

"My own master? Yes: except for my sentence of death."

"Then," she said, with a voice full of bitter feeling, "if all this were not a dream, how fair a life were ours! But if I have talked follies, let us do none. When I think of all that you should be if you are to rate me at my just worth, everything seems to me doubtful."

"And I should doubt of nothing if you would be mine."

"Hush!" she cried, hearing these words spoken with a true accent of passion. "The fresh air is getting really too much for you: let us go to our chaperons."

The coach was not long in catching the couple up: they took their seats once more, and for some leagues journeyed in profound silence. But if both had gathered matter for abundant thought, their eyes were no longer afraid of meeting. Both seemed equally concerned in watching each other and in hiding important secrets, but both felt the mutual attraction of a desire which since their conversation had acquired the strength and range of a passion: for each had recognized in the other qualities which promised in their eyes yet livelier delights, it might be from conflict, it might be from union. Perchance each of them, already launched on an adventurous career, had arrived at that strange condition of mind when, either out of mere weariness, or as a challenge to fate, men simply decline to reflect seriously on their situation, and abandon themselves to the chapter of accidents as they pursue their object, precisely because exit seems hopeless, and they are content to wait for the fated ending. Has not moral, like physical nature, gulfs and abysses, where strong minds love to plunge at the risk of life, as a gambler loves to stake his whole fortune? The young noble and Mlle. de Verneuil had, as it were, a glimpse of such ideas as these, which both shared after the conversation of which they were the natural sequel: and thus they made a sudden and vast stride in intimacy, the sympathy of their souls following that of their senses.

Nevertheless, the more fatally they felt themselves drawn each to other, the more interest they took in mutual study, were it only to augment, by the result of unconscious calculation, the amount of their future joys. The young man, still astonished at the strange girl's depth of thought, asked himself first how she managed to combine so much acquired knowledge with so much freshness and youth. Next he thought that he could discern a certain strong desire of appearing innocent in the extreme innocence with which Marie endeavoured to imbue her ways: he suspected her of feigning, found fault with himself for his delight, and tried to see in the strange lady nothing but a clever actress. He was right. Mlle. de Verneuil, like all young women who have gone much into society, increased her apparent reserve the warmer were her real feelings, and assumed in the most natural way in the world the prudish demeanour under which women are able to veil their most violent desires. All of them would, if they could, present a virgin front to passion: and if they cannot, their semblance of it is still an homage paid to their love. The young noble thought all this rapidly enough, and it pleased him. For both, in fact, this exchange of study was sure to be an advance in love: and the lover soon came, by means of it, to that phase of passion when a man finds in the very faults of his mistress, reasons for loving her more. The pensiveness of Mlle. de Verneuil lasted longer than the emigrant's: it might be that her lively fancy made her look forward to a longer future. The young man merely obeyed a single one of the thousand feelings which his man's life was sure to make him experience: the girl saw her whole life before her, and delighted in arranging it in beauty, in filling it with happiness, with honour, with noble sentiment. Happy in her own thoughts, as much enamoured of her dreams as of reality, of the future as of the present, Marie tried to hark

back, so as to clench her hold of the young man's heart—an instinctive movement with her, as with all women. She had made up her mind to surrender entirely: but she still wished, so to say, to haggle over details. She would have willingly revoked everything that she had done, in speech, in glance, in action, during the past, so as to make it harmonize with the dignity of a woman who is loved. And so her eyes exhibited now and then a kind of affright, as she thought of the past conversation in which she had taken so high a ground. But as she looked on his face—so full of vigour—she thought that such a being must be generous as he was strong: and felt herself happy in a lot fairer than that of most other women, in that she had found a lover in a man with a character of his own, a man who, despite the sentence of death hanging over his head, had come of his own accord to stake it, and to make war against the Republic. The thought of unshared dominion over such a soul soon presented the colour of all actual things quite differently to her. There was the difference of a dead and a living universe between the time when, some five hours earlier, she had made up her face and voice to serve as baits for this gentleman, and the present moment, when a look of hers could overcome him. Her cheerful laughs, her gay coquetries, hid a depth of passion which presented itself, like misfortune, with a smile. In the state of mind in which Mlle. de Verneuil then was, outward existence seemed to her a mere phantasmagoria. The coach passed villages, valleys, hills, whereof no impression charged her memory. She came to Mayenne; the soldiers of the escort were relieved. Merle spoke to her, she answered, she crossed the city, she began her journey afresh: but faces, houses, streets, landscapes, men, slipped by her like the unsubstantial shapes of a dream. Night fell. But Marie travelled on under a starry heaven, wrapped in soft light, along the

Fougères road, without even thinking that the face of the sky had changed, without even knowing what Mayenne meant, what Fougères, or whither she was going. That she might in a few hours be parted from the man she had chosen, and who, as she thought, had chosen her, did not enter her thoughts as possible. Love is the only passion which knows nothing of past or future. If at times her thoughts translated themselves into words, the words which escaped her were almost destitute of meaning. Yet still they echoed in her lover's heart like a promise of delight. Both witnesses of this birth of passion saw that it grew with terrible rapidity. Francine knew Marie as well as the strange lady knew the young man: and their knowledge of the past filled them with silent expectation of some alarming catastrophe. Nor as a matter of fact were they long in seeing the end of the drama to which Mlle. de Verneuil had given, perhaps unconsciously, the ominous name of tragedy.

The four travellers had journeyed about a league beyond Mayenne, when they heard a horseman galloping at the top of his speed towards them. He had no sooner caught up the carriage than he stooped to gaze at Mlle. de Verneuil, who recognized Corentin. This sinister person permitted himself a meaning gesture, the familiar nature of which was a kind of insult, and disappeared after striking her blood cold with this vulgar signal. The incident seemed to strike the emigrant disagreeably, and certainly did not escape his so-called mother; but Marie touched him lightly and, by a glance, seemed to implore a refuge in his heart as if it were the only asylum open to her on earth. The young man's brow cleared as he felt the pleasurable influence of the gesture, in which his mistress had revealed, as though by oversight, the extent of her attachment. A fear which she did not understand had banished all her coquetry, and for an instant love showed himself unveiled: they seemed not

to dare to speak, as if for fear of breaking the sweet spell of the moment. Unluckily, the watchful eye of Madame du Gua was in their midst; and she, like a miser presiding at a feast, seemed to count their morsels and dole them out their space of life. Given up to their happiness, the two lovers arrived, without consciousness of the long journey they had made, at that part of the road which is at the bottom of the valley of Ernée, the first of the three hollows forming the scene of the events which open our history. There Francine perceived, and pointed out to her mistress, some singular figures which seemed to flit like shadows across the trees, and amidst the *ajoncs* which surrounded the fields. But when the carriage came within range of these shadows, a volley of musketry (the balls passing over their heads) told the travellers that there was a solid reality in these apparitions. The escort had fallen into an ambuscade.

At this lively fusillade Captain Merle felt a regret as lively that he had shared the miscalculation of Mlle. de Verneuil, who, in her belief that a quick march by night would be exposed to no danger, had only allowed him to take some threescore men. Under Gérard's orders the captain at once divided his little force into two columns, so as to take the two sides of the road, and each officer set out at a brisk run across the fields of broom and *ajoncs*, desirous to engage the enemy without even waiting to discover their numbers. The Blues began to beat these thick bushes to left and to right with a valour by no means tempered with discretion, and replied to the Chouans' attack by a well-sustained fire into the broom-tufts whence the hostile shots came. Mlle. de Verneuil's first impulse had been to leap from the coach and run back, so as to put as long a space as possible between herself and the battle-field; but then, ashamed of her fear, and influenced by the natural desire to show nobly in the eyes of a beloved object, she stood

motionless, and tried to watch the combat calmly. The emigrant followed her movements, took her hand and placed it on his heart.

"I was afraid," she said, smiling, "but now——"

At that moment her maid exclaimed in a fright, "Marie! take care!" But Francine, who had made as though to spring from the carriage, felt herself stopped by a strong hand, the enormous weight of which drew a sharp cry from her. But when she turned her head and recognized the face of Marche-à-Terre she became silent.

"To your mistake then," said the stranger to Mlle. de Verneuil, "I shall owe the discovery of secrets the sweetest to the heart. Thanks to Francine, I learn that you bear the lovely name of Marie—Marie, the name which I have always invoked in my moments of sorrow! Marie, the name that I shall henceforth invoke in my joy, and which I can never mention without sacrilegiously mingling religion and love. Yet can it be a crime to love and pray at the same time?" As he spoke each clutched the other's hand tight, and they gazed in silence at each other, the very excess of their feeling depriving them of the ability to express it.

"There is no danger for *you*," said Marche-à-Terre roughly to Francine, infusing into his voice, naturally harsh

and guttural, a sinister tone of reproach, and emphasizing his words in a manner which struck the innocent peasant with terror. Never before had the poor girl seen ferocity in the looks of Marche-à-Terre. Moonlight seemed the only suitable illumination for his aspect; and the fierce Breton, his bonnet in one hand, his heavy rifle in the other, his form huddled together like a gnome's, and wrapped in those floods of pallid light which give such weird outlines to all shapes, looked a creature of fairy-land rather than of the actual world. The appearance, and the reproach it uttered, had also a ghost-like rapidity. He turned abruptly to Madame du Gua and exchanged some quick words with her, of which Francine, who had almost forgotten her Low-Breton, could catch nothing. The lady appeared to be giving repeated commands to Marche-à-Terre, and the brief colloquy ended by an imperious gesture with which she pointed to the two lovers. Before obeying, Marche-à-Terre cast a final glance at Francine : he seemed to pity her, and to wish to speak to her; but the Breton girl understood that her lover's silence was due to orders. The man's tanned and rugged skin seemed to wrinkle on his forehead, and his eyebrows were strongly contracted. Was he resisting a fresh order to kill Mlle. de Verneuil ? The grimace no doubt made him look more hideous than ever to Madame du Gua; but the flash of his eye took a gentler meaning for Francine, who, guessing from it that her woman's will could still master the energy of this wild man, hoped still to reign, under God, over his savage heart. The sweet converse in which Marie was engaged was interrupted by Madame du Gua, who came up and caught hold of her, uttering a cry as if there were some sudden danger. But her real object was merely to give one of the members of the Alençon Royalist committee, whom she recognized, an opportunity of speaking freely to the emigrant.

"Do not trust the girl you met at 'The Three Moors.'"

Having whispered these words in the young man's ear, the Chevalier de Valois, mounted on a Breton pony, disappeared in the broom from which he had just emerged. At the same moment the musketry swelled into a rolling fire of astonishing briskness, but no close fighting took place.

"Adjutant," said Clef-des-Cœurs, "may it not be a feigned attack, in order to carry off our travellers, and put them to ransom?"

"The devil take me if you have not hit it!" cried Gérard, hastening back to the road.

But at the same time the Chouans' fire slackened, for the real object of the skirmish had been to effect the communication which the chevalier had made to the young man. Merle, who saw them making off in no great numbers across the hedges, did not think it worth while to entangle himself in a struggle, which could not be profitable, and might be dangerous: while Gérard with an order or two reformed the escort on the road, and began his march once more, having suffered no losses. The captain had an opportunity of offering his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil, that she might take her seat, for the young noble remained standing as if thunderstruck. Surprised at this, the Parisian girl got in without accepting the Republican's courtesy. She turned towards her lover, saw his motionless attitude, and was stupefied at the change which the chevalier's mysterious words had produced. The young emigrant came slowly back, and his air showed a deep sense of disgust.

"Was I not right?" whispered Madame du Gua, in his ear, as she walked with him back to the carriage, "we are certainly in the hands of a creature who has entered into a bargain for your life. But since she is fool enough to fall in love with you, instead of attending to her business, do not yourself behave childishly, but feign love for her, till we

have reached the Vivetière. When we are once there—— But can he be actually in love with her already?" said she to herself, seeing the young man motionless in his place, like one asleep.

The coach rolled almost noiselessly along the sandy road. At the first glance that Mlle. de Verneuil cast around her, all seemed changed. Death was already creeping upon her love. There was nothing, perhaps, but a mere shade of difference, but such a shade, in the eyes of a loving woman, affords as great a contrast as the liveliest colours. Francine had understood by Marche-à-Terre's look, that the destiny of Mlle. de Verneuil, over which she had bidden him watch, was in other hands than his: and she exhibited a pale countenance, unable to refrain from tears, when her mistress looked at her. The unknown lady hid but ill, under feigned smiles, the spite of feminine revenge, and the sudden change which her excessive attentions towards Mlle. de Verneuil infused into her attitude, her voice, and her features, was of a nature to give alarm to a sharp-sighted person. So Mlle. de Verneuil instinctively shuddered, asking herself the while, "Why did I shudder? she is his mother," and then she trembled all over as she suddenly said to herself, "But is she really his mother?" She saw before her an abyss which was finally illuminated by a last glance which she cast at the stranger. "The woman loves him!" she thought. "But why load me with attentions, after showing me so much coolness? Am I lost? Or is she afraid of me?"

As for the emigrant, he grew red and pale by turns, and preserved a calm appearance only by dropping his eyes so as to hide the singular emotions which disturbed him. The agreeable curve of his lips was spoilt by their being tightly pinched, and his complexion yellowed with the violence of his stormy thoughts. Mlle. de Verneuil could not even

discover whether there was any love left amid this rage. But the road, which at this spot was lined with trees, became dark, and prevented the silent actors in this drama from questioning each other with their eyes. The sighing of the wind, the rustle of the tufted trees, the measured pulse of the escort's tramp, gave the scene that solemn character which quickens the heart's beats. It was not possible for Mlle. de Verneuil to seek long in vain for the cause of the change. The remembrance of Corentin passed like lightning across her mind, and brought with it the image, as it were, of her true destiny, suddenly appearing before her. For the first time since the morning she reflected seriously on her position. Till that moment she had simply let herself enjoy the happiness of loving without thinking either of herself or of the future. Unable any longer to endure her anguish, she waited with the gentle patience of love for one of the young man's glances, and returned it with one of such lively supplication, with a pallor and a shudder possessing so thrilling an eloquence, that he wavered. But the catastrophe was only the more thorough.

"Are you ill, mademoiselle?" he asked.

The voice without a touch of kindness, the question itself, the look, the gesture, all helped to convince the poor girl that the incidents of the day had been part of a soul-mirage, which was vanishing like the shapeless wreck which the wind carries away.

"Am I ill?" she replied, with a forced laugh. "I was going to put the same question to you."

"I thought you understood each other," said Madame du Gua, with assumed good-humour.

But neither the young nobleman nor Mlle. de Verneuil answered. She, doubly offended, was indignant at finding her mighty beauty without might. She knew well enough that at any moment she pleased she could learn the enigma

of the situation: but she felt little curiosity to penetrate it, and, for the first time, perhaps, a woman recoiled before a secret. Human life is sadly prolific of circumstances where, in consequence it may be of too deep a study, it may be of some sudden disaster, our ideas lose all coherence, have no substance, no regular starting-point, where the present finds all the bonds cut which unite it to the future and the past. Such was Mlle. de Verneuil's state. She reclined, her head bent, in the back of the carriage, and lay like an uprooted shrub, speechless and suffering. She looked at no one, wrapped herself in grief, and abode with such persistence in the strange world of grief where the unhappy take refuge, that she lost sight of things around. Ravens passed croaking over the heads of the party, but though, like all strong minds, she kept a corner of her soul for superstitions, she paid no attention to them. The travellers journeyed for some time in total silence.

"Parted already!" thought Mlle. de Verneuil to herself. "Yet nothing round me has told tales! Can it be Corentin? He has no interest in doing so. Who has arisen as my accuser? I had scarcely begun to be loved, and lo! the horror of desertion is already upon me. I sowed affection and I reap contempt. Is it my fate then always to come in sight of happiness and always to lose it?"

She was feeling a trouble strange to her heart, for she loved really and for the first time. Yet she was not so much given up to her grief but that she could find resources against it in the pride natural to a young and beautiful woman. She had not published the secret of her love—a secret which tortures will often fail to draw forth. She rallied; and, ashamed of giving the measure of her passion by her silent suffering, she shook her head gaily, showed a smiling face, or rather a smiling mask, and put constraint on her voice to disguise its altered tone.

"Where are we?" she asked of Captain Merle, who still kept his place at a little distance from the coach.

"Three leagues and a half from Fougères, mademoiselle."

"Then we shall get there soon?" she said, to tempt him to enter on a conversation in which she intended to show the young captain some favour.

"These leagues," answered Merle, overjoyed, "are not very long in themselves; but in this country they take the liberty of never coming to an end. When you reach the summit of the ridge we are climbing you will perceive a valley like that which we shall soon quit, and on the horizon you will then see the summit of the Pilgrim. Pray God, the Chouans may not try to play a return match there! Now you can understand that in going up and down like this, one does not make much progress. From the Pilgrim you will then see——"

As he spoke the emigrant started a second time, but so slightly that only Mlle. de Verneuil noticed the start.

"What is the Pilgrim?" asked the young lady briskly, interrupting the captain's lecture on Breton topography.

"It is," answered Merle, "a hill-top which gives its name to the valley of Maine, whereupon we are going to enter, and which separates that province from the valley of the Couësnon. At the other end of this valley is Fougères, the first town in Brittany. We had a fight there at the end of Vendémiaire with the Gars and his brigands. We were escorting some conscripts, who, to save themselves from leaving their

country, wanted to kill us on the border line. But Hulot is an ugly customer, and he gave them——"

"Then you must have seen the Gars?" asked she. "What sort of a man is he?"

And as she spoke she never took her piercing and sarcastic glance off the pretended Vicomte de Bauvan.

"Well, really, mademoiselle," said Merle, who was doomed to be interrupted, "he is so like the Citizen du Gua that if he did not wear the uniform of the Ecole Polytechnique, I would bet that it is he."

Mlle. de Verneuil gazed at the young man, who, cool and motionless, continued to regard her with contempt. She saw nothing in him that could betray a feeling of fear: but she let him know by a bitter smile that she was discovering the secret he had so dishonourably kept. And then, in a mocking voice, her nostrils quivering with joy, her head on one side, so as to look at Merle and examine the young noble at the same time, she said to the Republican, "The First Consul, captain, is very much concerned about this chief. He is a bold man, they say: only, he has a habit of too giddily undertaking certain enterprises, especially when women are concerned."

"That is just what we reckon upon," said the captain, "to pay off our score with him. Let us get hold of him for only a couple of hours, and we will put a little lead into his skull. If he met us, the gentleman from Coblentz would do the same by us, and send us to the dark place, and so one good turn deserves another."

"Oh!" said the emigrant, "there is nothing to fear. Your soldiers will never get as far as the Pilgrim, they are too weary, and, if you please, they can rest but a step from here. My mother alights at the Vivetière, and there is the road to it some gunshots off. These two ladies will be glad to rest: they must be tired after coming without a halt from

Alençon here. And since mademoiselle," said he, turning with forced politeness towards his mistress, "has been so generous as to impart to our journey at once safety and enjoyment, she will perhaps condescend to accept an invitation to sup with my mother? What is more, captain," he added, addressing Merle, "the times are not so bad but that a hogshead of cider may turn up at the Vivetière for your men to tap. The Gars can hardly have made a clean sweep: at least, my mother thinks so——"

"Your mother?" interrupted Mlle. de Verneuil, ironically catching him up, and making no reply to the unusual invitation which was made to her.

"Has the evening made my age incredible to you, mademoiselle?" answered Madame du Gua. "I was unfortunate enough to be married very young; my son was born when I was fifteen——"

"Surely you mistake, madame. Do you not mean thirty?"

Madame du Gua grew pale, as she had to swallow this insult; she would have given much for vengeance, but found herself obliged to smile, for she was anxious at any price, even that of suffering the most biting epigrams, to find out what the girl's real intentions were, and so she pretended not to have understood.

"The Chouans have never had a more cruel leader than the Gars, if we are to believe the reports about him," said she, addressing Francine and her mistress at the same time.

"Oh! I do not think him cruel," answered Mlle. de Verneuil, "but he knows how to tell falsehoods, and seems to me very credulous. Now, a partisan chief should be no one's dupe."

"You know him then?" asked the young emigrant, coldly.

"No," she replied, with disdainful glance at him, "I *thought* I knew him——"

"Oh! mademoiselle, he is certainly a keen hand," said the captain, shaking his head, and giving to the word he used (*malin*), by an expressive gesture, the special shade of meaning which it then had and has now lost. "These old stocks sometimes throw off vigorous suckers. He comes from a country where the *ci-devants* are, they say, not exactly in clover: and men, you see, are like medlars, they ripen on the straw. If the fellow keeps his wits about him, he may give us a long dance. He has found out the way to meet our free companies with light companies, and to neutralize all the Government's attempts. If we burn a Royalist village he burns two belonging to Republicans. He is carrying on operations over an immense area; and thus obliges us to employ a great number of troops at a moment when we have none to spare. Oh! he knows his business."

"He is the assassin of his country!" said Gérard, interrupting the captain with a deep voice.

"But," said the young noble, "if his death will deliver the country, shoot him as soon as you can."

Then he plunged his glance into Mlle. de Verneuil's soul, and there passed between them one of those scenes without words whose dramatic vivacity and intangible finesse speech can very imperfectly render. Danger makes men interesting, and when it is a question of life and death, the vilest criminal always excites a little pity. Therefore, though Mlle. de Verneuil was now confident that her scornful lover was this redoubted chief, she would not ascertain the fact at the moment by procuring his execution. She had another curiosity to satisfy, and preferring to make her passion the standard of her faith or doubt, began a game of hazard with danger. Her glance, steeped

in treacherous scorn, triumphantly pointed out the soldiers to the young chief, and, while holding up the image of his peril before him, she took pleasure in impressing on him the painful thought that his life depended on a word, and that her lips were on the point of opening to pronounce it. Like an Indian savage, she seemed to put the very lineaments of her enemy to the question as he was bound to the stake, and shook her tomahawk delicately, as though relishing a vengeance innocent of effect, and punishing like a mistress who still loves.

"Had I a son like yours," she said to the strange lady, who was in evident alarm, "I should begin to wear mourning for him on the day when I exposed him to danger."

She received no answer, and though she turned her head a score of times first towards the officers, and then sharply back towards Madame du Gua, she could not catch between her and the Gars any secret signal which assured her of a correspondence which she at once suspected and wished not to suspect. So pleasant is it to a woman to remain undecided in a life and death struggle when the word of decision is hers. The young general wore the calmest of smiles, and endured without flinching the torture to which Mlle. de Verneuil put him. His attitude, and the expression of his features, spoke a man careless of the danger to which he had knowingly exposed himself, and now and then he seemed to say, "Here is an opportunity of avenging your wounded vanity. Seize it! I should be in despair at having to relinquish my contempt for you." Mlle. de Verneuil on her side scrutinized the chief from the height of her vantage with, in appearance, a mixture of insolence and dignity. In appearance only, for at the bottom of her heart she admired his cool intrepidity. Delighted at discovering that her lover bore an ancient name (for privilege of this kind pleases all women) she felt an added

pleasure at meeting him in a situation where, defending a cause ennobled by misfortune, he was wrestling with all the might of a strong soul against the Republic which had so often prevailed, and at seeing him grappling with danger and showing the prowess which has such power over women's hearts. So she tried him afresh a score of times, following perhaps the instinct which leads a woman to play with her victim as a cat plays with the captured mouse.

"On what legal authority do you doom the Chouans to death?" asked she of Merle.

"Why, on that of the law of the 14th of last Fructidor, which outlaws the revolted departments and establishes courts-martial in them," replied the Republican.

"What is the immediate reason which gives me the honour of your attention?" said she to the young chief, who was examining her carefully.

"It is a feeling which a gentleman cannot express to any woman, whosoever she be," answered the Marquis of Montauran, in a low voice, stooping towards her. "It was worth while," added he aloud, "to live at this time, in order to see girls [1] playing the executioner, and outvieing him in their axe-play."

She gazed at Montauran; then, delighted at receiving a public insult from the man at the moment when his life was in her hands, she said in his ear, with a laugh of gentle mockery, "Your head is not good enough. No executioner would care for it, and I will keep it for myself."

The astonished marquis stared for some time at this strange girl, whose love was still the lord of all, even of the

[1] There is no word in which French has a more unfair advantage over its translators than the double sense of *fille*, which can be used indifferently in the same breath as simply "girl," and as conveying a gross insult. It may not be an enviable privilege, but it exists. The somewhat similar play on *mauvaise tête* below is less idiomatic.—*Translator's Note.*

most stinging insults, and who took her vengeance by pardoning an offence which women never forgive. His eyes lost something of their cold severity, and a touch of melancholy suffused his features. His passion was already stronger than he himself knew. Mlle. de Verneuil, contented with this pledge, slight as it was, of the reconciliation she had sought, gave the chief a tender look, threw at him a smile which was very like a kiss, and then lay back in the

carriage, unwilling to play any more tricks with the future of this comedy of happiness, and thinking that she had knitted his bonds afresh by the smile. She was so beautiful! She was so cunning in making the course of love run smooth! She was so accustomed to take everything in sport, to walk as chance chose! She was so fond of the unforeseen and the storms of life!

In accordance with the marquis's orders, the carriage shortly after left the highway, and made for the Vivetière along a hollow lane shut in by high slopes, planted with apple trees, which turned it into a ditch rather than a road. The travellers left the Blues behind them to make their slow way to the manor-house, whose grey roofs appeared and disappeared by turns between the trees of the lane, where not

a few soldiers had to fall out to wrench their shoes from the tenacious clay.

"This looks very much like the road to Paradise!" cried Beau-Pied.

Thanks to the postilion, who knew his way, no long time passed before Mlle. de Verneuil saw the Château de la Vivetière. The house, perched on a kind of promontory, was defended and surrounded by two deep ponds, which left no way of access but by following a narrow causeway. The part of the peninsula on which the buildings and the gardens lay was further protected for a certain distance behind the chateau by a wide moat, receiving the overflow of the ponds with which it communicated. It was thus in fact an almost impregnable island, and an invaluable refuge for any leader, since he could not be surprised except by treachery. As she heard the rusty hinges of the gate creak, and passed under the pointed arch of the gateway, which had been in ruins since the late war, Mlle. de Verneuil put her head out, and the sinister colours of the picture which met her eyes almost effaced the thoughts of love and of coquetry with which she had been lulling herself. The carriage entered a large courtyard, almost square in shape, and enclosed by the steep banks of the ponds. These wild embankments, bathed by waters covered with huge green patches, were unadorned save by leafless trees of aquatic species, whose stunted trunks and huge tufted heads rising above rushes and brushwood, resembled grotesque statues. These uncomely hedges seemed endowed with life and speech as the frogs left them croaking, and the water-hens, awaked by the noise of the coach, fluttered flapping over the surface of the ponds. The courtyard, surrounded by tall withered grass, by *ajoncs*, by dwarf and climbing shrubs, was destitute of all appearance of neatness or splendour. The chateau itself appeared to have been long deserted;

the roofs seemed crumbling under their weight of vegetation ; the walls, though built of the solid schistous stone which the soil supplies in abundance, were full of cracks to which the ivy clung. Two wings, connected at right angles by a lofty tower, and facing the pond, made up the whole chateau, whose doors and blinds hanging rotten, whose rusty balustrades and shattered windows seemed likely to fall at the first breath of tempest. The night breeze whistled through the ruins, to which the moon with its uncertain light lent the character and semblance of a huge spectre. The colours of this blue and grey granite contrasted with the black and yellow schist must have been seen in order to recognize the truth of the image which this dark and empty carcass suggested. Its stones wrenched asunder, its unglazed casements, its crenellated tower, its roofs open to the sky, gave it exactly the air of a skeleton ; and the very birds who took to flight hooting gave an additional stroke to this vague resemblance. Some lofty fir-trees, planted behind the house, waved their dark foliage above the roof, and some yews, originally trained to give ornament to the corners, now framed it with melancholy drapery like funeral palls. Lastly, the shape of the doors, the rude style of the ornamentation, the lack of uniformity in the buildings, were all characteristic of one of those feudal manor-houses whereon Brittany prides herself. And not without reason, perhaps, inasmuch as they enrich this Gaelic country with a sort of history in monuments of the shadowy times preceding the general establishment of the monarchy. Mlle. de Verneuil, in whose fancy the word "chateau" always took the shape of a conventional type, was struck by the funereal aspect of the picture, jumped lightly from the coach, and stood alone, gazing full of alarm, and wondering what she had better do. Francine heard Madame du Gua give a sigh of joy at finding herself out of reach of the Blues, and an involuntary cry escaped her when the gate was shut and she

found herself caged in this kind of natural fortress. Montauran had darted quickly to Mlle. de Verneuil, guessing the thoughts that occupied her.

"This chateau," said he, with a touch of sadness, "has been shattered by war, as the projects I built for our happiness have been shattered by you."

"How so?" she asked, in deep surprise.

"Are you 'a woman, young, beautiful, *noble* and witty,'" he said, with a tone of irony, repeating to her the words which she had said to him so coquettishly in their conversation on the road.

"Who has told you the contrary?"

"Some trustworthy friends, who take an interest in my safety and are watching to counterplot treachery."

"Treachery!" she said, in a sarcastic tone. "Are Alençon and Hulot so far off? You seem to lack memory, an awkward defect for a partisan chief. But from the moment when *friends*," she added, with studied insolence, "reign in your heart with such omnipotence—be content with your friends. There is nothing comparable to the pleasures of friendship. Farewell! I will not set foot within these walls, nor shall the soldiers of the Republic."

She darted towards the gate with an impulse of scorn and wounded pride, but her action disclosed a nobility of feeling and a despair which entirely changed the ideas of the marquis, who felt the pain of renouncing his desires too much not to be imprudent and credulous. He too was already in love; and neither of the lovers had any desire to prolong their quarrel.

"Add one word and I will believe you," he said in a beseeching tone.

"One word?" she said ironically, and with clenched lips. "One word? Will not even one gesture do?"

"Scold me at least," said he, trying to seize a hand which she drew away, "if indeed you dare to sulk with a rebel chief who is now as mistrustful and sombre as just now he was confiding and gay."

Marie looked at the marquis without anger, and he added:

"You have my secret, and I have not yours."

But at these words her brow of alabaster seemed to darken. Marie cast an angry look at the chief, and answered, "My secret? Never!"

In love, every word and every look has its momentary eloquence, but on this occasion Mlle. de Verneuil gave no precise indication of her meaning, and clever as Montauran

was, the riddle of the exclamation remained unsolved for him, though her voice had betrayed some extraordinary emotion which must have strongly tempted his curiosity.

"You have," he said, "an agreeable manner of dispelling suspicion."

"Do you still entertain any?" she said, looking him up and down as much as to say, "Have you any rights over me?"

"Mademoiselle," answered the young man, with an air at once humble and firm, "the power which you exercise over the Republican troops, this escort——"

"Ah! you remind me. Shall I and my escort," asked she, with a touch of irony, "will your protectors, I should say, be in safety here?"

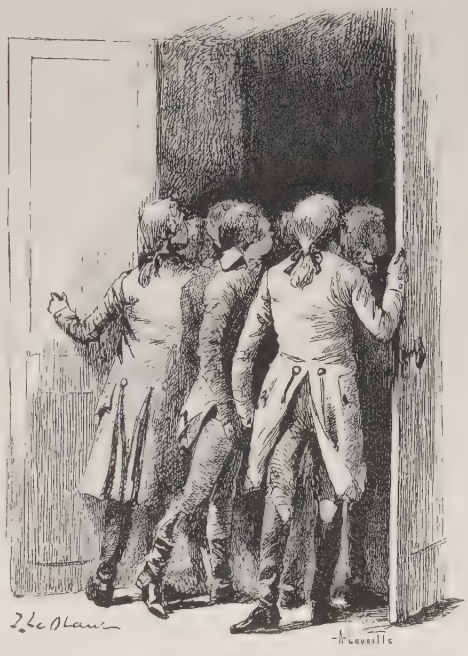
"Yes, on the faith of a gentleman. Whoever you are, you and yours have nothing to fear from me."

This pledge was given with an air of such sincerity and generosity that Mlle. de Verneuil could not but feel fully reassured as to the fate of the Republicans. She was about to speak, when the arrival of Madame du Gua silenced her. This lady had been able either to hear, or to guess part of the conversation between the lovers, and was not a little anxious at finding them in a posture which did not display the least unkindly feeling. When he saw her, the marquis offered his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil, and started briskly towards the house as if to rid himself of an unwelcome companion.

"I am in their way," said the strange lady, remaining motionless where she stood, and gazing at the two reconciled lovers as they made their way slowly towards the entrance-stairs, where they halted to talk as soon as they had put a certain distance between her and themselves. "Yes! yes! I am in their way," she went on, speaking to herself, "but in a little time the creature shall be no more in mine! By heaven! the pond shall be her grave. Shall I not keep your

'faith of a gentleman' for you? Once under water, what has anyone to fear? Will she not be *safe* there?"

She was gazing steadily at the clear mirror of the little lake on the right when suddenly she heard the brambles on the bank rustle, and saw by moonlight the face of Marche-à-Terre rising behind the knotty trunk of an old willow. Only those who knew the Chouan could have made him out in the midst of this crowd of pollarded stumps among which his own form easily confounded itself. Madame du Gua first threw a watchful look around her. She saw the postilion leading his horses off to a stable in the wing of the chateau which faced the bank where Marche-à-Terre was hidden; while Francine was making her way towards the two lovers, who at the moment had forgotten everything on earth. Then the strange lady stepped forward with her finger on her lips to insist on complete silence: after which the Chouan understood rather than heard the following words:



"How many of you are here?"

"Eighty-seven."

"*They* are only sixty-five: I counted them."

"Good!" said the savage with ferocious satisfaction.

Then the Chouan, who kept an eye on Francine's least movement, dived behind the willow bark as he saw her turn

back to look for the female foe of whom she was instinctively watchful.

Seven or eight persons, attracted by the noise of the carriage wheels, showed themselves on the top of the front stairway, and cried, "'Tis the Gars! 'Tis he! Here he is!" At this cry others ran up, and their presence disturbed the lovers' talk. The Marquis of Montauran advanced hastily towards these gentlemen, and bade them be silent with a commanding gesture, pointing out to them the head of the avenue where the Republican troops were debouching. At sight of the well-known blue uniforms faced with red and the flashing bayonets, the astounded conspirators cried:

"Have you come to betray us?"

"If I had I should hardly warn you of the danger," answered the marquis, smiling bitterly. "These Blues," he continued, after a pause, "are the escort of this young lady, whose generosity has miraculously delivered us from the danger to which we had nearly fallen victims in an inn at Alençon. We will tell you the story. Mademoiselle and her escort are here on my parole, and must be received as friends."

Madame du Gua and Francine having arrived at the steps, the marquis gallantly presented his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil. The group of gentlemen fell back into two rows, in order to give them passage, and all strove to distinguish the stranger's features: for Madame du Gua had already heightened their curiosity by making some private signals. Mlle. de Verneuil beheld in the first apartment a large table handsomely laid for some score of guests. This dining-room communicated with a large saloon in which the company was shortly collected. Both chambers were in harmony with the spectacle of ruin which the exterior of the chateau presented. The wainscot, wrought in polished walnut, but of rough, coarse, ill-finished workmanship in very high relief,

was wrenched asunder and seemed ready to fall. Its dark hue added yet more to the melancholy aspect of rooms without curtains or mirrors, where a few pieces of ancient and ramshackle furniture matched with the general effect of dilapidation. Marie saw maps and plans lying unrolled on a large table, and in the corners of the room piles of swords and rifles. The whole bore witness to an important conference between the Chouan and Vendéan chiefs. The marquis led Mlle. de Verneuil to a vast worm-eaten armchair which stood by the fireplace, and Francine placed herself behind her mistress, leaning on the back of the venerable piece of furniture.

"You will excuse me for a moment, that I may do my duty as host?" said the marquis, as he left the couple, and mixed in the groups which his guests formed.

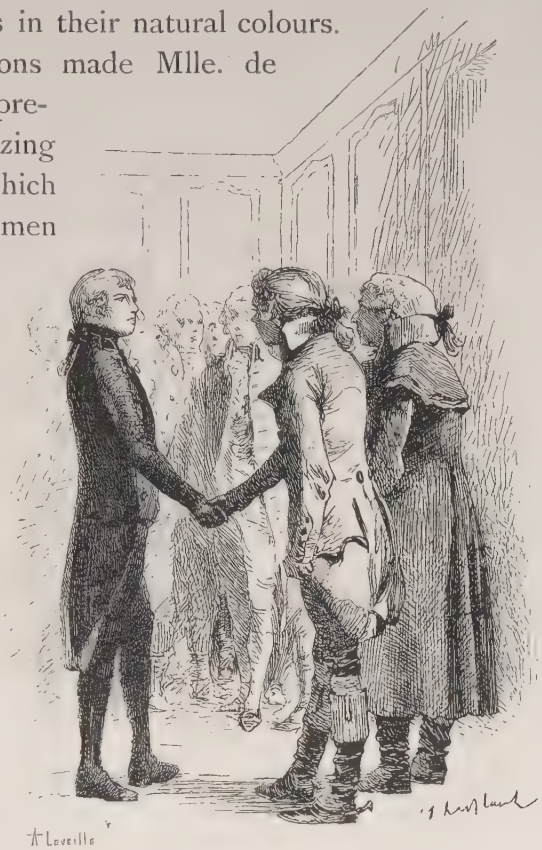
Francine saw all the chiefs, in consequence of a word from Montauran, hastily hiding their maps, their arms, and everything that could excite the suspicions of the Republican officers: while some laid aside broad belts which contained pistols and hangers. The marquis recommended the greatest possible discretion, and went out with apologies for the necessity of looking after the reception of the troublesome guests that chance was giving him. Mlle. de Verneuil, who had put her feet to the fire, endeavouring to warm them, allowed Montauran to leave without turning her head: and thus disappointed the expectation of the company, who were all anxious to see her. The gentlemen gathered round the unknown lady, and while she carried on with them a conversation *sotto voce*, there was not one who did not turn round more than once to examine the two strangers.

"You know Montauran," she said, "he fell in love with the girl at first sight: and you can quite understand that the best advice sounded suspicious to him when it came from my mouth. Our friends at Paris, and Messieurs de Valois and d'Esgrignon of Alençon as well, have all warned

him of the snare that is being laid for him by throwing some baggage at his head: and yet he takes up with the first he meets, a girl who, according to my information, has stolen a great name in order to disgrace it," and so forth.

This lady, in whom the reader must have already recognized the woman who decided the Chouans on attacking the *turgotine*, shall keep henceforward in our history the appellation which helped her to escape the dangers of her journey by Alençon. The publication of her real name could only offend a distinguished family, already deeply grieved at the misconduct of a daughter, whose fate has moreover been the subject of another drama than this. But the attitude of inquisitiveness which the company took soon became impertinent and almost hostile. Some harsh exclamations reached Francine's ear, and she, after whispering to her mistress, took refuge in the embrasure of a window. Marie herself rose, turned towards the insulting group, and cast on them dignified and even scornful glances. Her beauty, her elegant manners, and her haughtiness, suddenly changed the disposition of her enemies, and gained her a flattering murmur of admiration, which seemed to escape them against their will. Two or three men, whose exterior showed those habits of politeness and gallantry which are learnt in the exalted sphere of a court, drew near Marie with a good grace. But the modesty of her demeanour inspired them with respect, no one dared to address her, and she was so far from occupying the position of accused, that she seemed to be their judge. Nor had these chiefs of a war, undertaken for God and the King, much resemblance to the fancy portraits of them which she had amused herself with drawing. The struggle, great as it really was, shrunk and assumed mean proportions in her eyes when she saw before her, with the exception of two or three vigorous faces, mere country squires destitute of character and vivacity. Marie dropped suddenly from poetry to plain

prose. The countenances about her gave a first impression rather of a desire to intrigue than of the love of glory. It was self-interest that had really called these gentlemen to arms; and if they became heroic on actual service, here they showed themselves in their natural colours. The loss of her illusions made Mlle. de Verneuil unjust, and prevented her from recognizing the sincere devotion which made some of these men so remarkable. Yet most of them certainly showed a want of distinction in manner, and the few characteristic heads which were notable among them, were robbed of grandeur by the formal etiquette of aristocracy. Even though Marie was liberal enough to grant shrewdness and acuteness of mind to these persons, she found in them a complete lack of the magnificent simplicity to which she was accustomed in the successful men of the Republic. This nocturnal assembly, held in the ruined fortalice, under grotesque architectural devices which suited the faces well enough, made her smile as she chose to see in it a picture symbolizing the monarchy. Soon there came to her the delightful thought that at any rate the marquis played the most important part among these folk, whose only merit in her eyes



was their devotion to a lost cause. She sketched in fancy the form of her lover among the crowd, pleased herself with setting him off against them, and saw in their thin and meagre personalities nothing but tools of his great designs. At this moment the marquis's steps rang in the neighbouring room: the conspirators suddenly melted into separate groups, and the whispering ceased. Like schoolboys who had been planning some trick during their master's absence, they eagerly feigned good behaviour and silence. Montauran entered, and Marie had the happiness of admiring him among these men of whom he was the youngest, the handsomest, the first. As a king does amidst his courtiers, he went from group to group, distributing slight nods, hand-shakes, glances, words of intelligence or reproach, playing his part of party chief with a grace and coolness difficult to anticipate in a young man whom she had at first taken for a mere giddypate. The marquis's presence put an end to the inquisitiveness which had been busy with Mlle. de Verneuil, but Madame du Gua's ill-nature soon produced its effect. The Baron du Guénic (surnamed *L'Intimé*), who, among all these men assembled by matters of such grave interest, seemed alone entitled by his name and rank to use familiarity with Montauran, took his arm, and led him aside.

"Listen, my dear marquis," said he, "we are all in pain at seeing you about to commit an egregious piece of folly."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you know where this girl comes from, who she really is, and what her designs on you are?"

"My dear L'Intimé, be it said between ourselves, my fancy will have passed by to-morrow morning."

"Granted, but how if the baggage gives you up before daybreak?"

"I will answer you when you tell me why she has not

done so already," replied Montauran, assuming in jest an air of coxcombry.

"Why, if she likes you, she probably would not care to betray you till *her* fancy, too, has 'passed.'"

"My dear fellow, do look at that charming girl. Observe her ways, and then say, if you dare, that she is not a lady. If she cast favouring eyes on you, would you not in your inmost soul feel some respect for her? A dame whom we know has prejudiced you against her. But after the conversation we have had, if I found her to be one of the wantons our friends speak of, I would kill her."

"Do you think," said Madame du Gua, breaking into the talk, "that Fouché is fool enough to pick up the girl he sends against you at a street corner? He has proportioned her charms to your ability. But if you are blind, your friends must keep their eyes open to watch over you."

"Madame," answered the Gars, darting an angry glance at her, "take care not to attempt anything against this young person, or against her escort, otherwise nothing shall save you from my vengeance. I will have the young lady treated with the greatest respect, and as one who belongs to me. We have, I believe, some connection with the Verneuils."

The opposition with which the marquis met had the usual effect of similar obstacles on young people. Although he had in appearance treated Mlle. de Verneuil very cavalierly, and had made believe that his passion for her was a mere caprice, he had just, in an impulse of pride, taken a long step forward. After making the lady's cause his, he found his honour concerned in her being respectfully treated, so he went from group to group giving assurances, after the fashion of a man dangerous to cross, that the stranger was really Mlle. de Verneuil: and forthwith all murmurs were silenced. When Montauran had re-established a kind of

peace in the saloon and had satisfied all exigencies, he drew near his mistress with an eager air, and whispered to her:

"These people have deprived me of some minutes of happiness."

"I am glad to have you near me," answered she, laughing. "I warn you that I am curious: so do not be too tired of my questions. Tell me first who is that good man who wears a green cloth waistcoat?"

"'Tis the well-known Major Brigaut, a man of the Marais, comrade of the late Mercier, called La Vendée."

"And who is the fat red-faced priest with whom he is just now talking about me?" went on Mlle de Verneuil.

"You want to know what they are saying?"

"*Do* I want to know? Do you call that a question?"

"But I cannot tell you without insulting you."

"As soon as you allow me to be insulted without exacting vengeance for the insults proffered me in your house, farewell, marquis! I will not stay a moment longer here: as it is, I am ashamed of deceiving these poor Republicans who are so loyal and confiding," and she made some steps, but the marquis followed her.

"My dear Marie, listen to me. On my honour I silenced their unkind words before knowing whether they are true words or false. Nevertheless, in my situation, when our allies in the Government offices at Paris have warned me to mistrust every kind of woman I meet on my path, telling me at the same time that Fouché has made up his mind to employ some street-walking Judith against me, my best friends may surely be pardoned for thinking that you are too beautiful to be an honest woman——"

And as he spoke the marquis plunged his eyes into those of Mlle. de Verneuil, who blushed, and could not keep back her tears.

"I deserved this insult," she said. "I would fain see you

sure that I am a worthless creature, and yet know myself loved: *then* I should doubt you no more. For my part I believed you when you deceived me, and you disbelieve me when I speak truth. Enough of this, sir," she said, frowning, and with the paleness of approaching death on her face, "adieu!"

She dashed from the room with a despairing movement, but the young marquis said in her ear, "Marie! my life is yours!"

She stopped and looked at him. "No! no!" she said, "I am generous. Farewell! I thought not as I came with you of my past or of your future. I was mad!"

"What! you leave me at the moment when I offer you my life?"

"You are offering it in a moment of passion, of desire——"

"But without regret, and for ever!" said he.

She re-entered the room, and to hide his emotion the marquis continued their conversation: "The fat man whose name you asked me is a redoubtable person. He is the Abbé Gudin, one of those Jesuits who are certainly headstrong enough, and perhaps devoted enough, to remain in France notwithstanding the edict of 1763 which banished them. He is a firebrand of war in these districts, and the organizer of the association called of the Sacred Heart. Accustomed to make religion his tool, he persuades the affiliated members that they will come to life again: and knows how to keep up their fanaticism by clever prophecies. You see, one has to make use of each man's private interest to gain a great end. In that lies the whole secret of politics."

"And the other, in a green old age, the muscular man whose face is so repulsive? There! the man dressed in a tattered lawyer's gown."

"Lawyer! he aspires to the rank of maréchal de camp. Have you never heard speak of Longuy?"

"What! 'tis he?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, affrighted. "You employ such men as that?"

"Hush! he might hear you. Do you see the other, engaged in criminal conversation with Madame du Gua?"

"The man in black, who looks like a judge?"

"He is one of our diplomatists, La Billardière, son of a counsellor in the Breton Parliament, whose real name is something like Flamet, but he is in the Princes' confidence."

"And his neighbour, who is just now clutching his clay pipe, and who rests all the fingers of his right hand on the wainscot like a clown?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, with a laugh.

"You have guessed him, by heavens! 'Tis a former gamekeeper of the lady's defunct husband. He commands one of the companies with which I meet the mobile battalions. He and Marche-à-Terre are perhaps the most conscientious servants that the king has hereabouts."

"But she—who is she?"

"She," continued the marquis, "she is the last mistress that Charette had. She has great influence on all these people."

"Has she remained faithful to him?"

But the marquis made no other answer than a slight grimace, expressing doubt.

"Do you think well of her?"

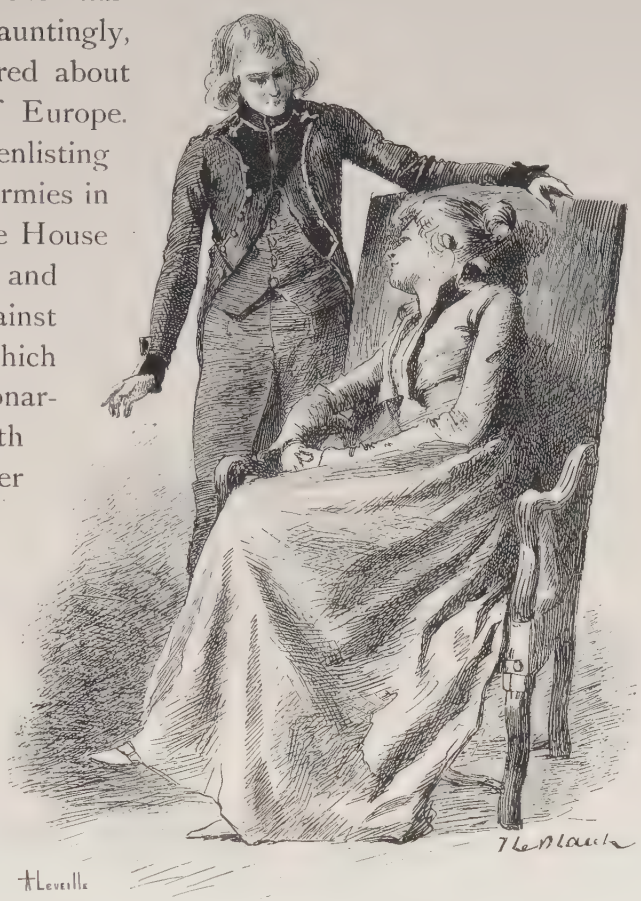
"Really, you are very inquisitive."

"She is my enemy: because she no longer can be my rival," said Mlle. de Verneuil, laughing. "I forgive her her past slips, let her forgive me mine. And the officer with the moustaches?"

"Pardon me if I do not name him. He wants to get rid of the First Consul by attacking him arms in hand. Whether he succeeds or not, you will hear of him some day. He will be famous."

"And you have come to take command of people like that?" she said, with horror. "These are the King's defenders! Where then are the gentlemen, the great lords?"

"Well," said the marquis somewhat tauntingly, "they are scattered about all the courts of Europe. Who else is enlisting kings, cabinets, armies in the service of the House of Bourbon, and urging them against this Republic, which threatens all monarchies with death and social order with complete destruction?"



"Ah!" she said, with generous emotion, "be to me henceforth the pure source whence I may draw such further ideas as I must learn. I have no objection to that. But allow me to think that you are the only noble who does his duty by attacking France with Frenchmen, and not with foreign aid. I am a woman, and I feel that if a child of mine struck me in anger I could pardon him: but if he looked on while a stranger tore me to pieces, I should regard him as a monster."

"You will always be a Republican," said the marquis, delightfully intoxicated by the glowing tones which confirmed his hopes.

"A Republican? I am not that any more. I could not esteem you if you were to submit to the First Consul," she went on, "but neither would I see you at the head of men who put a corner of France to pillage, instead of attacking the Republic in front. For whom are you fighting? What do you expect from a king restored to the throne by your hands? Once upon a time a woman undertook this same glorious task: and the king, after his deliverance, let her be burnt alive! These royal folk are the anointed of the Lord, and there is danger in touching consecrated things. Leave God alone to place, displace, or replace them on their purple seats. If you have weighed the reward which will come to you, you are ten times greater in my eyes than I thought you; and if so, you may trample me under your feet if you like; I will gladly permit you to do so."

"You are charming! Do not teach your lessons to these gentlemen, or I shall be left without soldiers."

"Ah! if you would let me convert you we would go a thousand miles hence."

"These men whom you seem to despise," replied the marquis in a graver tone, "will know how to die in the struggle, and their faults will be forgotten; besides, if my attempts meet with some success, will not the laurels of triumph hide all else?"

"You are the only man here who seems to me to have anything to lose."

"I am not the only one," said he, with real modesty; "there are two new Vendéan chiefs. The first, whom you heard them call Grand-Jacques, is the Comte de Fontaine; the other is La Billardière, whom I have pointed out to you already."

"And do you forget Quiberon, where La Billardière played a very singular part?" said she, struck by a sudden memory.

"La Billardière took on himself a great deal of responsibility; believe me, the service of princes is not a bed of roses."

"Ah! you make me shudder," cried Marie. "Marquis!" she went on, in a tone seemingly indicating a reticence, the mystery of which concerned him personally, "a single instant is enough to destroy an illusion and to unveil secrets on which the life and happiness of many men depend——" She stopped herself, as if she feared to say too much, and added, "I would fain know that the Republican soldiers are safe."

"I will be prudent," said he, smiling, to disguise his emotion; "but speak to me no more of your soldiers. I have answered for them already, on my honour as a gentleman."

"And after all what right have I to lead you?" said she, "be you always the master of us two. Did I not tell you that it would put me to despair to be mistress of a slave?"

"My lord marquis," said Major Brigaut, respectfully interrupting this conversation, "will the Blues stay long here?"

"They will go as soon as they have rested," cried Marie.

The marquis directing inquiring looks towards the company, saw that there was a flutter among them, left Mlle. de Verneuil and allowed Madame du Gua to come and take his place by her side. This lady wore a mask of laughing perfidy, which even the young chief's bitter smile did not disturb. But at the same moment Francine uttered a cry which she herself promptly checked. Mlle. de Verneuil, astonished at seeing her faithful country-maid flying towards the dining-room, turned her gaze on Madame du Gua, and

her surprise increased as she noted the pallor which had spread over the face of her enemy. Full of curiosity to know the secret of this abrupt departure, she advanced towards the recess of the window, whither her rival followed her, with the object of removing the suspicions which her indiscretion might have excited, and smiled at her with an indefinable air of malice, as, after both had cast a glance on the lake and its landscape, they returned together to the fireplace; Marie without having seen anything to justify Francine's flight, Madame du Gua satisfied that her orders were obeyed.

The lake, at the edge of which Marche-à-Terre, like a spirit conjured up by the lady, had appeared in the court, ran to join the moat surrounding the gardens in a series of misty reaches, sometimes broadening into ponds, sometimes contracted like canals in a park. The steeply shelving bank which these clear waters washed was but some fathoms distant from the window. Now Francine, who had been absorbed in watching the black lines sketched by the heads of some old willows on the face of the waters, was gazing half absently at the regular curves which the light breeze gave to their branches. Suddenly it seemed to her that she saw one of these shapes moving on the watery mirror, with the irregular and wilful motion which shows animal life; the form was vague enough, but seemed to be human. Francine at first set her vision down to the shadowy outlines which the moonlight produced through the branches; but soon a second head showed itself, and then others appeared in the distance, the small shrubs on the bank bent and rose again sharply, and Francine perceived in the long line of the hedge a gradual motion like that of a mighty Indian serpent of fabulous contour. Next, divers points of light flashed and shifted their position here and there among the brooms and the

tall brambles. Marche-à-Terre's beloved redoubled her attention, and in doing so she seemed to recognize the foremost of the black figures which were passing along this animated shore. The man's shape was very indistinct, but the beating of her heart assured her that it was really Marche-à-Terre whom she saw. Convinced by a gesture, and eager to know whether this mysterious movement hid some treachery or not, she darted towards the courtyard, and, when she had reached the middle of this green expanse, she scanned by turns the two wings and the two banks without observing any trace of this secret movement in the bank which faced the uninhabited part of the building. She strained her ear and heard a slight rustle like that which the steps of a wild beast might produce in the silent woods; she shuddered, but she did not tremble. Young and innocent as she still was, curiosity quickly suggested a trick to her. She saw the carriage, ran to it, hid herself in it, and only raised her head with the caution of the hare in whose ears the echo of the far-off hunt resounds. Then she saw Pille-Miche coming out of the stable. The Chouan was accompanied by two peasants, all three carrying trusses of straw; these they spread out in such a manner as to make a long bed of litter before the deserted wing and parallel to the bank with the dwarf trees, where the Chouans were moving with a silence which gave evidence of the preparation of some hideous stratagem.

"You are giving them as much straw as if they were really going to sleep here. Enough, Pille-Miche, enough!" said a low, harsh voice, which Francine knew.

"*Will* they not sleep there?" answered Pille-Miche, emitting a foolish guffaw. "But are you not afraid that the Gars will be angry?" he added, so low that Francine could not hear him.

"Well, suppose he is angry," replied Marche-à-Terre under his breath, "we shall have killed the Blues all the same. But," he went on, "there is a carriage which we two must run in."

Pille-Miche drew the coach by the pole and Marche-à-Terre pushed one of the wheels so smartly that Francine found herself in the barn and on the point of being shut up there before she had had time to reflect on her position. Pille-Miche went forth to help in bringing in the cask of cider which the marquis had ordered to be served out to the soldiers of the escort, and Marche-à-Terre was passing by the coach in order to go out and shut the door, when he felt himself stopped by a hand which caught the long hair of his goatskin. He met certain eyes whose sweetness exercised magnetic power over him, and he stood for a moment as if bewitched. Francine jumped briskly out of the carriage, and said to him in the aggressive tone which suits a vexed woman so admirably :

"Pierre, what were the news you brought to that lady and her son on the highway ? What are they doing here ? Why are you hiding ? I will know all !"

At these words the Chouan's face took an expression which Francine had never known him to wear. The Breton led his innocent mistress to the doorstep, and there turning her face towards the white blaze of the moon, he answered, staring at her with a terrible look :

"Yes, Francine, I will tell you, by my damnation ! but only when you have sworn on these beads," and he drew an old rosary from underneath the goatskin, "on this relic which you know," he went on, "to answer me truly one single question."

Francine blushed as she looked at the beads, which had doubtless been a love-token between them.

"On this it was," said the Chouan, with a voice full of

feeling, "that you swore——" but he did not finish. The peasant girl laid her hand on the lips of her wild lover to silence him.

"Need I swear?" said she.

He took his mistress gently by the hand, gazed at her for a minute and went on: "Is the young lady whom you serve really named Mlle. de Verneuil?"

Francine stood with her arms hanging by her sides, her eyelids drooping, her head bent. She was pale and speechless.

"She is a wanton!" continued Marche-à-Terre in a terrible voice. As he spoke the pretty hand tried to cover his lips once more: but this time he started violently back, and the Breton girl saw before her no longer a lover but a wild beast in all the savagery of its nature. The Chouan's eyebrows were fiercely contracted, his lips were drawn back, and he showed his teeth like a dog at bay in his master's defence. "I left you a flower, and I find you carrion! Ah! why did we ever part? You have come to betray us, to deliver up the Gars!"

His words were rather bellowings than articulate speech.

But though Francine was in terror, at this last reproach she summoned courage to look at his fierce face, raised eyes as of an angel to his, and answered calmly, "I will stake my salvation that that is false. These are the notions of your lady there!"

He lowered his eyes in turn. Then she took his hand, turned towards him with a caressing movement, and said: "Pierre, what have we to do with all this? Listen to me. I cannot tell how you can understand anything of it: for I understand nothing! But remember that this fair and noble young lady is my benefactress, that she is yours, too, and that we live like two sisters. No harm must ever happen to her when we are by, at least in our lifetime. Swear to me that it shall be so. I have no one here to trust to but you!"

"I am not master here!" replied the Chouan, sulkily, and his face darkened. She took hold of his great flapping ears and twisted them gently, as if she was playing with a cat.

"Well," said she, seeing him look less stern, "promise me that you will use all the power you have in the service of our benefactress."

He shook his head, as if doubtful of success, and the gesture made the Breton girl shudder. At this critical moment the escort reached the causeway. The tramp of the soldiers and the rattle of their arms woke the echoes of the courtyard, and seemed to decide Marche-à-Terre.

"I will save her—perhaps," he said to his mistress, "if you can manage to make her stay in the house," and he added, "Stay you by her there, and observe the deepest silence: if not, I answer for *nothing!*"

"I promise," she answered, in her affright.

"Well, then, go in. Go in at once, and hide your fear from everybody, even your mistress."

"Yes."

She pressed the hand of the Chouan, who looked at her

with a fatherly air while she flitted lightly as a bird to the entrance steps. Then he plunged into the hedge like an actor who runs into the wings when the curtain rises on a tragedy.

"Do you know, Merle, that this place looks to me just like a mouse-trap!" said Gérard, as he reached the chateau.

"I see it myself," said the captain, thoughtfully.

The two officers made haste to post sentries so as to make sure of the gate and the causeway: then they cast mistrustful looks at the banks and the surrounding landscape.

"Bah!" said Merle, "we must either enter this old barrack with confidence or not go in at all."

"Let us go in," said Gérard.

The soldiers, dismissed from the ranks by a word of their leaders, quickly stacked their muskets and pitched the colours in front of the bed of straw in the midst whereof appeared the cask of cider. Then they broke into groups, and two peasants began to serve out butter and rye-bread to them. The marquis came to receive the two officers and conducted them to the saloon, but when Gérard had mounted the steps and had gazed at the two wings of the building where the old larches spread their black boughs, he called Beau-Pied and Clef-des-Cœurs to him.

"You two are to explore the gardens between you and to beat the hedges. Do you understand? Then you will post a sentry by the stand of colours."

"May we light our fire before beginning the hunt, adjutant?" said Clef-des-Cœurs: and Gérard nodded.

"Look you, Clef-des-Cœurs," said Beau-Pied, "the adjutant is wrong to run his head into this wasp's-nest. If Hulot was in command he would never have jammed himself up. We are in a kind of stew-pan!"

"You are a donkey," replied Clef-des-Cœurs. "Why, can't you, the king of all sly fellows, guess that this watchbox

is the chateau of that amiable young lady after whom our merry Merle, the most accomplished of captains, is whistling? He will marry her: that is as clear as a well-polished bayonet. She will do the demi-brigade credit, a woman like that!"

"True," said Beau-Pied, "and you might add that this cider is good. But I can't drink in comfort in front of these beastly hedges. I seem to be always seeing before me Larose and Vieux-Chapeau as they tumbled into the ditch on the Pilgrim. I shall remember poor Larose's pigtail all my life. It wagged like a knocker on a street door."

"Beau-Pied, my friend, you have too much imagination for a soldier. You ought to make songs at the National Institute."

"If I have too much imagination," replied Beau-Pied, "you have got none. It will be some time before they make *you* consul!"

A laugh from the soldiers put an end to the conversation, for Clef-des-Cœurs found he had no cartridge in his box as an answer to his adversary.

"Are you going to make your rounds? I will take the right hand," said Beau-Pied.

"All right, I will take the left," answered his comrade, "but wait a minute first. I want to drink a glass of cider; my throat is gummed up like the sticking plaster on Hulot's best hat."

Now the left-hand side of the garden, which Clef-des-Cœurs thus neglected to explore at once, was unluckily that very dangerous bank where Francine had seen men moving. All is chance in war.

As Gérard entered the saloon and bowed to the company, he cast a penetrating glance on the men of whom that company was composed. His suspicions returned upon his mind with greater strength than ever: he suddenly went to Mlle.

de Verneuil and said to her in a low tone, "I think you had better withdraw quickly: we are not safe here."

"Are you afraid of anything in *my* house?" she asked, laughing. "You are safer here than you would be at Mayenne."

A woman always answers confidently for her lover: and the two officers were less anxious.

The company immediately went into the dining-room, in spite of some casual mention of a somewhat important guest who was late. Mlle. de Verneuil was able, thanks to the usual silence at the beginning of dinner, to bestow some attention on this assembly, which in its actual circumstances was curious enough, and of which she was in a manner the cause, in virtue of the ignorance which women, who are accustomed to take nothing seriously, carry into the most critical incidents of life. One fact suddenly struck her,—that the two Republican officers dominated the whole company by the imposing character of their countenances. Their long hair drawn back from the temples, and clubbed in a huge pigtail behind the neck, gave to their foreheads the pure and noble outline which so adorns youthful heads.

Their threadbare blue uniforms, with the worn red facings, even their epaulettes flung back in marching, and showing (as they were wont to do throughout the army, even in the case of generals,) evidence of the lack of great coats, made a striking contrast between these martial figures and the company in which they were.

"Ah! there is the nation, there is liberty!" thought she; then glancing at the Royalists, "and there is a single man, a king, and privilege!"

She could not help admiring the figure of Merle, so exactly did the lively soldier answer to the type of the French warrior, who can whistle an air in the midst of bullets, and who never forgets to pass a joke on the comrade who makes a blunder. Gérard, on the other hand, had a commanding presence, grave and cool. He seemed to possess one of those truly Republican souls who at the time thronged the French armies, and, inspiring them with a spirit of devotion as noble as it was unobtrusive, impressed on them a character of hitherto unknown energy.

"There is one of those who take long views," said Mlle. de Verneuil; "they take their stand on the present, and dominate it; they destroy the past, but it is for the good of the future."

The thought saddened her, because it did not apply to her lover, towards whom she turned, that she might avenge herself by a fresh feeling of admiration on the Republic, which she already began to hate. As she saw the marquis surrounded by men, bold enough, fanatical enough, and gifted with sufficient power of speculating on the future, to attack a victorious Republic, in the hope of restoring a dead monarchy, a religion laid under interdict, princes errant, and privileges out of date, she thought, "He at least looks as far as the other, for, amid the ruins where he ensconces himself, he is striving to make a future out of the past."

Her mind, feeding full on fancies, wavered between the new ruins and the old. Her conscience indeed warned her that one man was fighting for a single individual, the other for his country: but sentiment had carried her to the same point at which others arrive by a process of reasoning—to the acknowledgment that the king *is* the country.

The marquis, hearing the steps of a man in the saloon, rose to go and meet him. He recognized the belated guest, who, surprised at his company, was about to speak. But the Gars hid from the Republicans the sign which he made desiring the new-comer to be silent and join the feast. As the two officers studied the countenances of their hosts, the suspicions which they had first entertained revived. The Abbé Gudin's priestly garb, and the eccentricity of the Chouans' attire, alarmed their prudence: they became more watchful than ever, and soon made out some amusing contrasts between the behaviour and the language of the guests. While the Republicanism which some showed was exaggerated, the ways of others were aristocratic in the extreme. Some glances which they caught passing between the marquis and his guests, some phrases of double meaning indiscreetly uttered, and, most of all, the full round beards which adorned the throats of several guests, and which were hidden awkwardly enough by their cravats, at last told the two officers a truth which struck both at the same moment. They communicated their common thought to each other by a single interchange of looks: for Madame du Gua had dexterously divided them, and they were confined to eye-language. Their situation made it imperative that they should behave warily, for they knew not whether they were masters of the chateau or had fallen into an ambuscade, whether Mlle. de Verneuil was the dupe or the accomplice of this puzzling adventure. But an unforeseen event hastened the catastrophe before they had had time to estimate its full

gravity. The new guest was one of those high complexioned persons, squarely built throughout, who lean back as they walk, who seem to make a commotion in the air around them, and who think that everyone will take more looks than one as they pass. Despite his rank, he had taken life as a joke, which one must make the best of: but though a worshipper of self, he was good-natured, polite, and intelligent enough after the fashion of those country gentlemen, who, having finished their education at court, return to their estates, and will not admit the idea that they can even in a score of years have grown rusty there. Such men make a grave blunder with perfect self-possession, say silly things in a witty way, distrust good fortune with a great deal of shrewdness, and take extraordinary pains to get themselves into a mess. When, by plying knife and fork in the style of a good trencherman, he had made up for lost time, he cast his eyes over the company. His astonishment was redoubled as he saw the two officers, and he directed a questioning glance at Madame du Gua, who by way of sole reply pointed Mlle. de Verneuil out to him. When he saw the enchantress whose beauty was already beginning to stifle the feelings which Madame du Gua had excited in the company's minds, the portly stranger let slip one of those insolent and mocking smiles which seem to contain the whole of an equivocal story. He leant towards his neighbour's ear, saying two or three words, and these words, which remained a secret for the officers and Marie, journeyed from ear to ear, from lip to lip, till they reached the heart of him on whom they were to inflict a mortal wound. The Vendéan and Chouan chiefs turned their glances with merciless curiosity on the Marquis of Montauran, while those of Madame du Gua, flashing with joy, travelled from the marquis to the astonished Mlle. de Verneuil. The officers interrogated each other anxiously but mutely, as they waited for the end

of this strange scene. Then, in a moment, the forks ceased to play in every hand, silence reigned in the hall, and all eyes were concentrated on the Gars. A frightful burst of rage flushed his face with anger and then bleached it to the colour of wax. The young chief turned to the guest from whom this train of slow match had started, and said in a voice that seemed muffled in crape:

"Death of my life! Count, is that true?"

"On my honour," said the count, bowing gravely.

The marquis dropped his eyes for a moment, and then, raising them quickly, directed them at Marie, who was watching the struggle, and received a deadly glance.

"I would give my life," said he in a low tone, "for instant vengeance!"

The mere movement of his lips interpreted this phrase to Madame du Gua, and she smiled on the young man as one smiles at a friend whose misery will soon be over. The scorn for Mlle. de Verneuil which was depicted on every face put the finishing touch to the wrath of the two Republicans, who rose abruptly.

"What do you desire, citizens?" asked Madame du Gua.

"Our swords, *citizeness*," said Gérard with sarcasm.

"You do not need them at table," said the marquis coldly.

"No, but we are about to play a game which you know," answered Gérard.[1] "We shall have a little closer view of each other than we had at the Pilgrim!"

The assembly was struck dumb: but at the same moment a volley, discharged with a regularity appalling to the officers, crashed out in the courtyard. They darted to the entrance steps, and thence they saw some hundred Chouans taking aim

[1] The text has here *en reparaissant* "re-appearing." It has not been said that Gérard had left the room, nor could he well have done so. The words are probably an oversight.—*Translator's Note.*

at a few soldiers who had survived the first volley, and shooting them down like hares. The Bretons had come forth from the bank where Marche-à-Terre had posted them

—a post occupied at the peril of their lives, for as they executed their movement, and after the last shots died away, there was heard above the groans of the dying the sound of some Chouans falling into the water with the splash of stones dropping into an abyss. Pille-Miche levelled his piece at Gérard, and Marche-à-Terre covered Merle.

"Captain," said the marquis coolly to Merle, repeating the words which the Republican had uttered respecting himself, "*you see, men are like medlars, they ripen on straw.*" And with a wave of his hand he showed him the whole escort of Blues stretched on the blood-stained litter, where the Chouans were despatching the living and stripping the dead with incredible rapidity. "I was right in telling you that your soldiers would not reach the Pilgrim," added the marquis; "also I think your head will be full of lead before mine is. What say you?"

Montauran felt a hideous desire to sate his rage, and his irony towards the vanquished, the savagery, and even the treachery of this military execution, which had been carried out without his orders, but for which he thus made himself responsible, corresponded with the secret wishes of his heart. In his fury he would have annihilated France itself, and the murdered Blues, with the two officers who were still alive, though all were innocent of the crime for which he was demanding vengeance, were in his hands like the cards which a desperate gamester tears with his teeth.

"I would rather perish thus than triumph like you," said Gérard, and as he saw his men lying naked in their blood, he cried, "You have foully murdered them!"

"Yes, sir, as Louis XVI. was murdered," replied the marquis sharply.

"Sir," replied Gérard haughtily, "there is a mystery in the trial of a king which you will never comprehend."

"What! bring a king to trial!" cried the marquis excitedly.

"What! bear arms against France!" retorted Gérard in a tone of disdain.

"Nonsense!" said the marquis.

"Parricide!" cried the Republican.

"Regicide!" returned the other.

"What!" said Merle, merrily enough, "are you seizing the moment of your death to bandy arguments?"

"You say well," said Gérard coolly, turning once more towards the marquis. "Sir, if it is your intention to kill us, do us at least the favour to shoot us at once."

"How like you!" struck in the captain, "always in a hurry to have done! My good friend, when a man has a long journey to make, and is not likely to breakfast next day, he takes time with his supper."

But Gérard, without a word, walked swiftly and proudly to the wall. Pille-Miche took aim at him, and seeing the marquis motionless, he took his chief's silence for an order, fired, and the adjutant-major fell like a tree. Marche-à-Terre ran forward to share this new booty with Pille-Miche, and they wrangled and grumbled like two hungry ravens over the still warm corpse.

"If you wish to finish your supper, captain, you are free to come with me," said the marquis to Merle, whom he wished to keep for exchange.

The captain went mechanically into the house with the marquis, saying in a low tone, as if reproaching himself, "It is that devil of a wench who is the cause of this! What will Hulot say?"

"Wench!" said the marquis, with a stifled cry, "then she is really and truly a wench?"

It might have been thought that the captain had dealt a mortal blow to Montauran, who followed him pale, gloomy, disordered, and with tottering steps. Meanwhile there had passed in the dining-room another scene, which in the absence of the marquis took so sinister a character, that Marie, finding herself without her champion, might reasonably believe in the death-warrant she saw in her rival's eyes. At the sound of the volley every guest had risen save Madame du Gua.

"Do not be alarmed," said she, "'tis nothing. Our folk are only killing the Blues!" But as soon as she saw that the marquis had left the room, she started up. "This young lady here," she cried, with the calmness of smothered fury, "came to carry off the Gars from us. She came to try and give him up to the Republic!"

"Since this morning I could have given him up twenty times over," replied Mlle. de Verneuil, "and I saved his life instead."

But Madame du Gua dashed at her rival like a flash of lightning. In her blind excitement she wrenched open the flimsy frogs on the spencer of the girl (who was taken unawares by this sudden assault), violated with brutal hand the sacred asylum where the letter was hidden, tore the stuff, the trimmings, the corset, the shift, nay, even made the most of this search so as to slake her jealous hatred, and so ardently and cruelly mauled the panting breast of her rival that she left on it the bloody traces of her nails, feeling a delight in subjecting her to so vile a profanation. As Marie feebly attempted to withstand the furious woman, her hood became unfastened and fell, her hair burst its bonds and rolled down in wavy curls, a modest blush glowed on her face, and then two tears made their moist and burning way down her cheeks, leaving her bright eyes brighter still. In short, the disorder of the struggle exposed her shuddering to the gaze of the guests, and the most callous judges must have believed her innocent as they saw her suffer.

Hatred is so blind that Madame du Gua did not notice that no one listened to her, as in her triumph she cried out, "See, gentlemen! have I slandered the horrid creature?"

"Not so very horrid," whispered the portly guest who had been the cause of the misfortune; "for my part, I am uncommonly fond of horrid things like that!"

"Here," continued the vindictive Vendéan lady, "is an

order, signed 'Laplace,' and countersigned 'Dubois.'" At these names some persons raised their heads in attention. "And this is its tenor," went on Madame du Gua: "'*Citizen commandants of the forces of all ranks, district administrators, procurators, syndics, and so forth, in the revolted departments, and especially those of the places where the ci-devant Marquis de Montauran, brigand-chief, surnamed the Gars, may be found, are to afford succour and help to the citizeness Marie Verneuil, and to obey any orders which she may give them, each in such matters as concern him, etc., etc.*'"

"To think of an opera girl taking an illustrious name in order to soil it with such infamy!" she added. The company showed a movement of surprise.

"The game is not fair if the Republic employs such pretty women against us!" said the Baron du Guénic, pleasantly.

"Especially girls who have nothing left to stake," rejoined Madame du Gua.

"Nothing?" said the Chevalier du Vissard. "Why, mademoiselle has resources which must bring her in a plenteous income!"

"The Republic must be in very merry mood to send ladies of pleasure to lay traps for us!" cried Abbé Gudin.

"But, unluckily, mademoiselle looks for pleasures which kill," said Madame du Gua, with an expression of hideous joy, which denoted the end of her jokes.

"How is it then that *you* are still alive, madame?" said the victim, regaining her feet after repairing the disorder of her dress. This stinging epigram produced some respect for so undaunted a martyr, and struck silence on the company. Madame du Gua saw flitting over the chiefs' lips a sarcastic smile which maddened her; and not perceiving that the marquis and the captain had come in, "Pille-Miche," she said to the Chouan, "take her away; she is my share of the

spoil; and I give her to you. Do with her whatever you like."

As she spoke the word "whatever," the company shuddered, for the frightful heads of Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre showed themselves behind the marquis, and the meaning of the intended punishment appeared in all its horror.

Francine remained standing, her hands clasped, her eyes streaming, as if thunderstruck. But Mlle. de Verneuil, who in the face of danger recovered all her presence of mind, cast a look of disdain at the assembly, repossessed herself of the letter which Madame du Gua held, raised her head, and with eyes dry, but flashing fire, darted to the door where stood Merle's sword. Here she met the marquis, cold and motionless as a statue. There was no plea in her favour on his face with its fixed and rigid features. Struck to the heart, she felt life become hateful. So then the man who had shown her such affection had just listened to the jeers which had been heaped upon her, and had remained an unmoved witness of the outrage she had suffered when those beauties, which a woman keeps as the privilege of love, had been subjected to the common gaze. She might perhaps have pardoned Montauran for his contemptuous

feelings: she was indignant at having been seen by him in a posture of disgrace. She darted at him a glance full of half-irrational hatred, and felt terrible desires of vengeance springing up in her heart. With death dogging her steps, her impotence choked her. As it were a whirlwind of madness rose to her brain, her boiling blood made her see everything around in the glare of a conflagration: and then, instead of killing herself, she seized the sword, flourished it at the marquis, and drove it on him up to the hilt. But the blade slipped between his arm and his side; the Gars caught Marie by her wrist and dragged her from the room, assisted by Pille-Mache, who threw himself on the mad woman at the moment when she tried to kill the marquis. At this spectacle Francine uttered piercing cries. "Pierre! Pierre! Pierre!" she shrieked in piteous tones, and as she cried she followed her mistress.

The marquis left the company to its astonishment, and went forth, shutting the door after him. When he reached the entrance steps he was still holding the girl's wrist and clutching it convulsively, while the nervous hands of Pille-Miche nearly crushed the bones of her arm: but she felt only the burning grasp of the young chief, at whom she directed a cold gaze.

"Sir," she said, "you hurt me."

But the only answer of the marquis was to stare for a moment at his mistress.

"Have *you* then something to take base vengeance for, as well as that woman?" she said, and then seeing the corpses stretched on the straw, she cried with a shudder, "The faith of a gentlemen! ha! ha! ha!" and after this burst of hideous laughter, she added, "A happy day!"

"Yes, a happy one," he answered, "and one without a morrow!"

He dropped Mlle. de Verneuil's hand, after gazing with a

long last look at the exquisite creature whom he could hardly bring himself to renounce. Neither of these lofty spirits would bend. The marquis perhaps expected tears: but the girl's eyes remained proudly dry. He turned brusquely away, leaving Pille-Miche his victim.

"Marquis!" she said, "God will hear me, and I shall pray Him to give you a happy day without a morrow!"

Pille-Miche, who was something embarrassed with so fair a prey, drew her oft gently, and with a mixture of respect and contempt. The marquis sighed; returned to the chamber, and showed his guests the face as of a dead man whose eyes have not been closed.

That Captain Merle should still be there was unintelligible to the actors in this tragedy: and they all looked at him with surprise, their looks questioning each other. Merle observed the Chouans' astonishment, and still keeping up his part, he said to them with a forced smile:

"I hardly think, gentlemen, that you will refuse a glass of wine to a man who is about to take his last journey." At the very same minute at which these words were spoken, with a Gallic gaiety which ought to have pleased the Vendéans, Montauran reappeared, and his pale face and glazed eyes chilled all the guests.

"You shall see," said the captain, "that the dead man will set the living ones going."

"Ah!" said the marquis, with the gesture of a man suddenly awakening, "you are there, my dear Court-Martial?"

And he handed him a bottle of *vin de grave* as if to fill his glass.

"Ah! no, thanks, citizen marquis. I might lose my head, you see."

At this sally Madame du Gua said to the guests, smiling:

"Come, let us excuse him the dessert."

"You are very severe in your revenge, madame," said the

captain. "You forget my murdered friend, who is waiting for me. I bide tryst."

"Captain," said the marquis, throwing his glove to him, "you are a free man. There, that will be your passport. The King's Huntsmen know that one must not kill down all the game."

"Life, by all means!" answered Merle. "But you are wrong. I give you my word that I shall play the game strictly with you. You will get no quarter from me. Clever as you may be, you are not Gérard's equal, and though your head will never make amends to me for his, I must have it, and I will have it."

"Why was he in such a hurry?" retorted the marquis.

"Farewell! I could have drunk with my own executioners, but I cannot stay with the murderers of my friend," said the captain, disappearing, and leaving the guests in astonishment.

"Well, gentlemen, what do you say now of the aldermen, the doctors, the lawyers, who govern the Republic?" said the Gars coolly.

"God's death! marquis," answered the Count de Bauvan, "whatever you may say, they are very ill-mannered. It seems to me that that fellow insulted us."

But the captain's sudden retirement had a hidden motive. The girl who had been the subject of so much contumely and humiliation, and who perhaps was falling a victim at the very moment, had, during the scene, shown him beauties so difficult to forget, that he said to himself as he went out:

"If she is a wench, she is no common one: and I can do with her as a wife."

He doubted so little his ability to save her from these savages that his first thought after receiving his own life had been to take her forthwith under his protection. Unluckily, when he arrived at the entrance the captain found the courtyard deserted. He looked around him, listened in

the silence, and heard nothing but the far-off laughter of the Chouans, who were drinking in the gardens while sharing their booty. He ventured to look round the fatal wing in front of which his men had been shot down, and from the corner, by the feeble light of a few candles, he could distinguish the various groups of the King's Huntsmen. Neither Pille-Miche nor Marche-à-Terre nor the young lady was there: but at the same moment he felt the skirt of his coat gently pulled, and turning, he saw Francine on her knees.

"Where is she?" said he.

"I do not know. Pierre drove me away, telling me not to stir."

"Which way have they gone?"

"That way," said she, pointing to the causeway. The captain and Francine then saw in this direction certain shadows thrown by the moonlight on the waters of the lake, and they recognized feminine outlines whose elegance, indistinct as they were, made both their hearts beat.

"Oh, it is she!" said the Breton girl.

Mlle. de Verneuil appeared to be quietly standing in the midst of a group whose attitudes indicated discussion.

"They are more than one!" cried the captain. "Never mind: let us go."

"You will get yourself killed to no profit," said Francine.

"I have died once to-day already," answered he lightly. And both bent their steps towards the dark gateway behind which the scene was passing. In the midst of the way Francine halted.

"No! I will go no farther!" said she gently. "Pierre told me not to meddle. I know him: and we shall spoil all. Do what you like, Mr. Officer, but pray depart. If Pierre were to see you with me he would kill you."

At that moment Pille-Miche showed himself outside the gate, saw the captain, and cried, levelling his gun at him:

"Saint Anne of Auray! the rector of Antrain was right when he said that the Blues made bargains with the devil! Wait a bit: I will teach you to come alive again, I will!"

"Ah! but I have had my life given me," cried Merle, seeing the threat. "Here is your chief's glove."

"Yes! that is just like a ghost!" retorted the Chouan. "*I* won't give you your life. *Ave Maria!*"

He fired, and the bullet hit the captain in the head and dropped him. When Francine drew near Merle she heard him murmur these words: "I had rather stay with them than return without them!"

The Chouan plunged on the Blue to strip him, saying: "The good thing about these ghosts is that they come alive again with their clothes on." But when he saw, after the captain's gesture of showing the chief's glove, this sacred passport in his hand, he stood dumbfoundered. "I would I were not in the skin of my mother's son!" he cried, and vanished with the speed of a bird.

To understand this meeting, which proved so fatal to the captain, it is necessary to follow Mlle. de Verneuil. When the marquis, overcome with despair and rage, abandoned her to Pille-Miche, at that moment Francine convulsively caught Marche-à-Terre's arm, and reminded him with tears in her eyes of the promise he had made her. A few paces from them Pille-Miche was dragging off his victim, just as he would have hauled after him any worthless burden. Marie, with streaming hair and bowed head, turned her eyes towards the lake: but, held back by a grasp of steel, she was obliged slowly to follow the Chouan, who turned more than once either to look at her or to hasten her steps, and at each turn some festive thought sketched on his face a horrible smile.

"Isn't she *smart?*" he cried, with clumsy emphasis.

As she heard these words Francine recovered her speech.

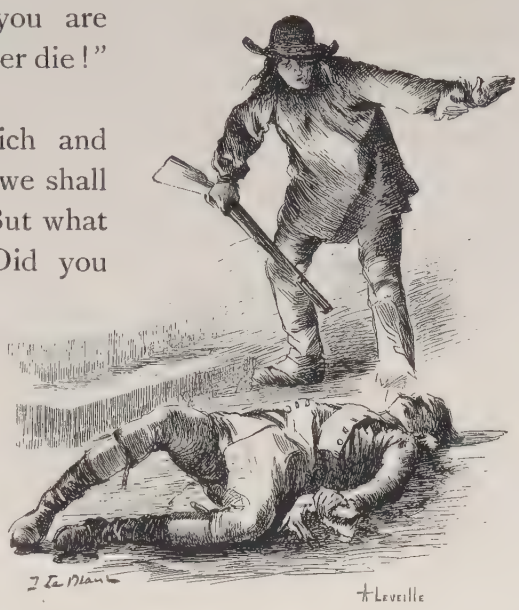
"Pierre!" she said.

"Well?"

"Is he going to kill mademoiselle?"

"Not at once," answered Marche-à-Terre.

"But she will not take it quietly, and if she dies, I will die!"



"Ah! very well—you are too fond of her. Let her die!" said Marche-à-Terre.

"If we are ever rich and happy, it is to her that we shall owe our happiness. But what does that matter? Did you not promise to save her from all evil?"

"I will try; but stay you there, and do not budge."

Marche-à-Terre's arm was at once released, and Francine, a prey to the most terrible anxiety, waited in the courtyard. Marche-à-Terre rejoined his comrade at the moment when Pille-Miche had entered the barn, and had forced his victim to get into the carriage. He now demanded the help of his mate to run it out.

"What are you going to do with all this?" asked Marche-à-Terre.

"Well, the Grande-Garce has given me the woman: and all she has is mine."

"That is all very well as to the carriage; you will make some money of it. But the woman will scratch your eyes out."

Pille-Miche laughed loudly, and replied:

"Why,[1] I shall carry her to my place, and tie her hands."

"Well, then, let us put the horses to," said Marche-à-Terre; and a moment later, leaving his comrade to guard the prey, he brought the carriage out of the door on to the causeway. Pille-Miche got in by Mlle. de Verneuil, but did not notice that she was gathering herself up for a spring into the lake.

"Hullo! Pille-Miche," cried Marche-à-Terre, suddenly.

"What?"

"I will buy your whole booty from you."

"Are you joking?" asked the Chouan, pulling his prisoner towards him by her skirts as a butcher might pull a calf trying to escape.

"Let me see her: I will make you a bid."

The unhappy girl was obliged to alight, and stood between the two Chouans, each of whom held her by a hand, staring at her as the elders must have stared at Susanna in her bath.

"Will you take," said Marche-à-Terre, heaving a sigh, "will you take thirty good livres a year?"

"You *mean* it?"

"Done!" said Marche-à-Terre, holding out his hand.

"And done! There is plenty in that to get Breton girls with, and smart ones, too! But whose is the carriage to be?" said Pille-Miche, thinking better of it.

"Mine!" said Marche-à-Terre, in a terrific tone of voice, exhibiting the kind of superiority over all his mates which was given him by his ferocious character.

"But suppose there is gold in the carriage?"

"Did you not say 'Done?'"

[1] Balzac has put some jargon in Pille-Miche's mouth. He is said to have written *Les Chouans* on the spot: but *quien*, *itou*, &c., are not, I think, Breton, and are suspiciously identical with the words in the famous *patois*-scenes in Molière's *Don Juan*.—*Translator's Note.*

"Yes, I did."

"Well, then, go and fetch the postilion who lies bound in the stable."

"But suppose there is gold in——"

"Is there?" asked Marche-à-Terre roughly of Marie, jogging her arm.

"I have about a hundred crowns," answered Mlle. de Verneuil.

At these words the two Chouans exchanged looks.

"Come, good friend, let us not quarrel about a Blue girl," whispered Pille-Miche to Marche-à-Terre. "Let us tip her into the pond with a stone round her neck, and share the hundred crowns!"

"I will give you them out of my share of D'Orgemont's ransom," cried Marche-à-Terre, choking down a growl caused by this sacrifice.

Pille-Miche, with a hoarse cry of joy, went to fetch the postilion, and his alacrity brought bad luck to the captain, who met him. When Marche-à-Terre heard the shot, he rushed quickly to the spot, where Francine, still aghast, was praying by the captain's body on her knees, and with clasped hands, so much terror had the sight of the murder struck into her.

"Run to your mistress," said the Chouan to her abruptly, "she is saved."

He himself hastened to fetch the postilion, returned with the speed of lightning, and, as he passed again by the body of Merle, caught sight of the Gars's glove still clutched convulsively in the dead man's hand.

"O ho!" cried he, "Pille-Miche has struck a foul blow there! He is not sure of living on his annuity!" He tore the glove away, and said to Mlle. de Verneuil, who had already taken her place in the coach by Francine's side, "Here! take this glove. If anyone attacks you on the way, cry 'Oh! the Gars!' show this passport, and no harm will happen to you. Francine," he added, turning to her and pressing her hand hard, "we are quits with this woman. Come with me, and let the devil take her!"

"You would have me abandon her *now?*" answered Francine in a sorrowful tone.

Marche-à-Terre scratched his ear and his brow: then lifted his head with a savage look in his eyes.

"You are right!" he said. "I will leave you to her for

a week. If after that you do not come with me——" He did not finish his sentence, but clapped his palm fiercely on the muzzle of his rifle, and after taking aim at his mistress in pantomime, he made off without waiting for a reply.

The Chouan had no sooner gone than a voice, which seemed to come from the pond, cried in a low tone, "Madame! madame!" The postilion and the two women shuddered with horror, for some corpses had floated up to the spot. But a Blue, who had been hidden behind a tree, showed himself:

"Let me get up on your coach-box, or I am a dead man," said he. "That damned glass of cider that Clef-des-Cœurs would drink, has cost more than one pint of blood! If he had done like me and made his rounds, our poor fellows would not be there floating like barges."

While these things went on without, the chiefs who had been delegated from La Vendée, and those of the Chouans, were consulting, glass in hand, under the presidency of the Marquis of Montauran. The discussion, which was enlivened by frequent libations of Bordeaux, became of serious importance towards the end of the meal. At dessert, when a common plan of operations had been arranged, the Royalists drank to the health of the Bourbons: and just then Pille-Miche's shot gave as it were an echo of the ruinous war which these gay and noble conspirators wished to make on the Republic. Madame du Gua started: and at the motion, caused by her delight at thinking herself relieved of her rival, the company looked at each other in silence, while the marquis rose from table and went out.

"After all, he was fond of her," said Madame du Gua sarcastically. "Go and keep him company, M. de Fontaine. He will bore us to extinction if we leave him to his blue devils."

She went to the window looking on the courtyard to try to see the corpse of Marie, and from this point she was able to descry, by the last rays of the setting moon, the coach ascending the avenue with incredible speed, while the veil of Mlle. de Verneuil, blown out by the wind, floated from within it. Seeing this, Madame du Gua left the meeting in a rage. The marquis, leaning on the entrance balustrade, and plunged in sombre thought, was gazing at about a hundred and fifty Chouans who, having concluded the partition of the booty in the gardens, had come back to finish the bread and the cask of cider promised to the Blues. These soldiers (new style) on whom the hopes of the Monarchy rested were drinking in knots : while on the bank which faced the entrance seven or eight of them amused themselves with tying stones to the corpses of the Blues, and throwing them into the water. This spectacle, added to the various pictures made up by the strange costume and savage physiognomies of the reckless and barbarous *gars*, was so singular and so novel to M. de Fontaine, who had had before him in the Vendéan troops some approach to nobility and discipline, that he seized the occasion to say to the Marquis of Montauran :

" What do you hope to make of brutes like these ? "

" Nothing much, you think, my dear count ? " answered the Gars.

" Will they ever be able to manœuvre in face of the Republicans ? "

" Never."

" Will they be able even to comprehend and carry out your orders ? "

" Never."

" Then what good will they do you ? "

" The good of enabling me to stab the Republic to the heart ! " answered the marquis in a voice of thunder.

"The good of giving me Fougères in three days, and all Brittany in ten! Come, sir!" he continued in a milder tone; "go you to La Vendée. Let D'Autichamp, Suzannet, the Abbé Bernier, make only as much haste as I do: let them not treat with the First Consul, as some would have me fear. And," he squeezed the Vendéan's hand hard, "in twenty days we shall be within thirty leagues of Paris!"

"But the Republic is sending against us sixty thousand men and General Brune!"

"What, sixty thousand, really?" said the marquis with a mocking laugh. "And what will Bonaparte make the Italian campaign with? As for General Brune, he is not coming. Bonaparte has sent him against the English in Holland; and General Hédouville, the friend of our friend Barras, takes his place here. Do you understand me?"

When he heard the marquis speak thus, M. de Fontaine looked at him with an arch and meaning air, which seemed to reproach him with not himself understanding the hidden sense of the words addressed to him. The two gentlemen from this moment understood each other perfectly; but the young chief answered the thoughts thus expressed by looks with an indefinable smile.

"M. de Fontaine, do you know my arms? Our motto is *Persevere unto death.*"

The count took Montauran's hand, and pressed it, saying: "I was left for dead at the Four-Ways, so you are not likely to doubt me. But believe my experience: times are changed."

"They are, indeed," said La Billardière, who joined them; "you are young, marquis. Listen to me. Not all your estates have been sold——"

"Ah! can you conceive devotion without sacrifice?" said Montauran.

"Do you know the King well?" said La Billardière.

"I do."

"Then I admire you."

"King and priest are one!" answered the young chief, "and I fight for the faith!"

They parted, the Vendéan convinced of the necessity of letting events take their course, and keeping his beliefs in his heart; La Billardière to return to England, Montauran to fight desperately, and to force the Vendéans by the successes of which he dreamed, to join his enterprises.

The course of events had agitated Mlle. de Verneuil's soul with so many emotions that she dropped exhausted, and as it were dead, in the corner of the carriage, after giving the order to drive to Fougères. Francine imitated her mistress's silence, and the postilion, who was in dread of some new adventure, made the best of his way to the high road, and soon reached the summit of the Pilgrim. Then Marie de Verneuil crossed in the dense white fog of early morning the beautiful and spacious valley of the Couësnon where our story began, and hardly noticed from the top of the hill the schistous rock whereon is built the town of Fougères, from which the travellers were still some two leagues distant. Herself perished with cold, she thought of the poor soldier who was behind the carriage, and insisted, despite his refusals, on his taking the place next Francine. The sight of Fougères drew her for a moment from her reverie: and besides, since the guard at the gate of Saint Leonard refused to allow unknown persons to enter the town, she was obliged to produce her letter from the Government. She found herself safe from all hostile attempts when she had entered the fortress, of which, at the moment, its inhabitants formed the sole garrison: but the postilion could find her no better resting-place than the auberge de la Poste.

"Madame," said the Blue whom she had rescued, "if

you ever want a sabre cut administered to any person, my life is yours. I am good at that. My name is Jean Faucon, called Beau-Pied, sergeant in the first company of Hulot's boys, the seventy-second demi-brigade, surnamed the

Mayençaise. Excuse my presumption, but I can only offer you a sergeant's life, since, for the moment, I have nothing else to put at your service." He turned on his heel and went his way, whistling.

"The lower one goes in society," said Marie bitterly, "the less of ostentation one finds, and the more of generous sentiment: a marquis returns me death for life: a sergeant ——But there, enough of this!"

When the beautiful Parisian had bestowed herself in a well-warmed bed, her faithful Francine expected, in vain, her usual affectionate good-night; but her mistress, seeing her uneasy, and still standing, made her a sign, full of sadness:

"They call that a day, Francine!" she said. "I am ten years older."

Next morning, as she was getting up, Corentin presented himself to call upon Marie, who permitted him to enter, saying to Francine: "My misfortune must be immense: for I can even put up with the sight of Corentin."

Nevertheless, when she saw the man once more, she felt for the thousandth time the instinctive repugnance which two years' acquaintance had not been able to check.

"Well?" said he, with a smile, "I thought you were going to succeed. Was it not he whom you had got hold of?"

"Corentin," she said, slowly, with a pained expression, "say nothing to me about this matter till I speak of it myself."

He walked up and down the room, casting side-long looks at Mlle. de Verneuil, and trying to divine the secret thoughts of this singular girl, whose glance was of force enough to disconcert, at times, the cleverest men. "I foresaw your defeat," he went on, after a minute's silence. "If it pleases you to make your headquarters in this town, I have already acquainted myself with matters. We are in the very heart of Chouanism. Will you stay here?"

She acquiesced with a nod of the head, which enabled Corentin to guess with partial truth the events of the night before.

"I have hired you a house which has been confiscated but not sold. They are much behindhand in this country: and nobody dared to buy the place, because it belongs to an emigrant who passes for being ill-tempered. It is near

Saint Leonard's Church, and 'pon honour,[1] there is a lovely view from it. Something may be done with the cabin, which is convenient. Will you come there?"

"Immediately," cried she.

"But I must have a few hours more to get things clean and in order, so that you may find them to your taste."

"What does it matter?" said she. "I could live, without minding it, in a cloister or a prison. Nevertheless, pray manage so that I may be able to rest there this evening in the most complete solitude. There! Leave me. Your presence is intolerable. I wish to be alone with Francine, with whom I can perhaps get on better than with myself. Farewell. Go! Do go!"

These words, rapidly spoken, and dashed by turns with coquetry, tyranny, and passion, showed that she had recovered complete tranquillity. Sleep had no doubt slowly expelled her impressions of the day before, and reflection determined her on vengeance. If, now and then, some sombre thoughts pictured themselves on her face, they only showed the faculty which some women have of burying the most passionate sentiments in their souls, and the dissimulation which allows them to smile graciously while they calculate a victim's doom. She remained alone, studying how she could get the marquis alive into her hands. For the first time she had passed a portion of her life as she could have wished: but nothing remained with her of this episode but one feeling—that of thirst for vengeance, vengeance vast and complete. This was her sole thought, her single passion. Francine's words and attentions found her dumb. She seemed to be asleep with her eyes open, and the whole long day passed without her making sign by a single gesture or action of that outward life which reveals our thoughts.

[1] Corentin says *ma paôle d'honneu*, using the lisp which was one of the numerous affectations of the *incroyables*.—*Translator's Note.*

She remained stretched on an ottoman which she had constructed out of chairs and pillows. Only at night-time did she let fall, carelessly, the following words, looking at Francine as she spoke:

"Child, I learnt yesterday that one may live for nothing but love; and to-day I learn that one may die for nothing but vengeance. Yes! To find him wherever he may be, to meet him once more, to seduce him and make him mine, I would give my life! But if in the course of a few days I do not find, stretched at my feet in abject humility, this man who has scorned me—if I do not make him my slave,—I shall be less than nothing—I shall be no more a woman—I shall be no more myself!"

The house which Corentin had suggested to Mlle. de Verneuil gave him opportunity enough to consult the girl's inborn taste for luxury and elegance. He got together everything which he knew ought to please her, with the eagerness of a lover towards his mistress, or, better still, with the obsequiousness of a man of importance who is anxious to ingratiate himself with some inferior of whom he has need. Next day he came to invite Mlle. de Verneuil to take up her quarters in these improvised lodgings.

Although she did little or nothing but change her uncomfortable ottoman for a sofa of antique pattern which Corentin had managed to discover for her, the fanciful Parisian took possession of the house as though it had been her own property. She showed at once a royal indifference for everything, and a sudden caprice for quite insignificant objects of furniture, which she at once appropriated as if they had been old favourites: traits common enough, but still not to be rejected in painting exceptional characters. She seemed as though she had already been familiar with this abode in dreams, and she subsisted on hatred there as she might have subsisted in the same place on love.

"At any rate," said she to herself, "I have not excited in him a feeling of the pity which is insulting and mortal. I do not owe him my life. Oh! first, sole, and last love of mine, what an ending is yours!" Then she made a spring on the startled Francine. "Are you in love? Yes! Yes! I remember that you are. Ah! it is lucky for me that I have beside me a woman who can enter into my feelings. Well, my poor Francine, does not man seem to you a horrible creature? Eh? He said he loved me: and he could not stand the feeblest tests. Why, if the whole world had repulsed him, *my* heart should have been his refuge: if the universe had accused him, *I* would have taken his part. Once upon a time I saw the world before me full of beings who went and came, all of them indifferent to me: it was melancholy, but not odious. Now, what is the world without him? Shall he live without me to be near him, to see him, to speak to him, to feel him, to hold him,—to hold him fast? Rather will I butcher him myself as he sleeps!"

Francine gazed at her in horror and silence for a minute. "Kill the man whom one loves?" she said in a low voice.

"Yes, when he loves no longer!"

But after this terrible speech she hid her face in her hands, sat down, and was silent.

On the next day a man presented himself abruptly before her without being announced. His countenance was stern. It was Hulot, and Corentin accompanied him. She raised her eyes, and shuddered.

"Have you come," she said, "to demand account of your friends? They are dead."

"I know it," answered Hulot. "But it was not in the Republic's service."

"It was for my sake, and by my fault," she replied. "You were about to speak to me of the country. Does the country restore life to those who die for her? Does

she even avenge them? I shall avenge these!" she cried. The mournful image of the catastrophe of which she had been victim had suddenly risen before her, and the gracious creature in whose eyes modesty was the first artifice of woman strode like a maniac with convulsive step towards the astonished commandant.

"In return for these massacred soldiers I will bring to the axe of your scaffolds a head worth thousands of heads!" she said. "Women are not often warriors: but old as you are, you may learn some tricks of war in my school. I will hand over to your bayonets his ancestors and himself, his future and his past. As I was kind and true to him, so now I will be treacherous and false. Yes, commandant, I will lure this young noble into my embraces, and he shall quit them only to take his death journey. I will take care never to have a rival. The wretch has pronounced his own sentence, 'A day without a morrow!' We shall both be avenged, your Republic and I. Your Republic!" she continued, in a voice whose strange variations of tone alarmed Hulot. "But shall the rebel die for having borne arms against his country? Shall France steal my vengeance from me? Nay, how small a thing is a life! One death atones for only one crime. Yet, if he has but one life to give, I shall have some hours in which to show him that he loses more than one life. Above all, commandant (for you will have the killing of him)," and she heaved a sigh, "take care that nothing betrays my treason, that he dies sure of my fidelity. That is all I ask of you. Let him see nothing but me—me and my endearments!"

She held her peace: but, flushed as was her face, Hulot and Corentin could see that wrath and fury had not entirely extinguished modesty. Marie shuddered violently as she spoke the last words: they seemed to echo in her ears as if she could not believe that she had uttered them: and she

gave a naïve start, with the involuntary gesture of a woman whose veil drops.

"But you had him in your hands!" said Corentin.

"It is very likely," said she bitterly.

"Why did you stop me when I had got him?" asked Hulot.

"Eh, commandant! We did not know that it would prove to be he."

Suddenly the excited woman, who was pacing the room hastily, and flinging flaming glances at the spectators of the storm, became calm.

"I had forgotten myself," she said, in a masculine tone. "What is the good of talking? We must go and find him."

"Go and find him!" said Hulot. "Take care, my dear child, to do nothing of the kind. We are not masters of

the country districts, and if you venture out of the town, you will be killed or taken before you have gone a hundred yards."

"Those who are eager for vengeance take no count of danger," she said, disdainfully dismissing from her presence the two men, whose sight struck her with shame.

"What a woman!" said Hulot, as he went out with Corentin. "What a notion it was of those police fellows in Paris! But she will never give him up to us," he added, shaking his head.

"Oh, yes, she will," replied Corentin.

"Don't you see that she loves him?" rejoined Hulot.

"That is exactly the reason. Besides," said Corentin, fixing his eyes on the astonished commandant, "I am here to prevent her making a fool of herself. For in my opinion, comrade, there is no such thing as love worth three hundred thousand francs."

When this diplomatist, who did not lie abroad, left the soldier, Hulot gazed after him, and as soon as he heard the noise of his step no longer, he sighed and said to himself:

"Then it *is* sometimes a lucky thing to be only a fool like me?——God's thunder! If I meet the Gars we will fight it out hand to hand, or my name is not Hulot. For if that fox there brought him before me as judge, now that they have set up courts-martial, I should think my conscience in as sorry a case as the shirt of a recruit who is going through his baptism of fire!"

The massacre at the Vivetière, and his own eagerness to avenge his two friends, had been as influential in making Hulot resume his command of his demi-brigade as the answer in which a new minister, Berthier, had assured him that his resignation could not be accepted under the circumstances. With the ministerial despatch there had come a confidential note in which, without informing him

fully of Mlle. de Verneuil's mission, the minister wrote that the incident, which lay quite outside warlike operations, need have no obstructive effect on them. "The share of the military leaders in this matter should be limited," said he, "to giving the honourable citizeness such assistance as opportunity afforded." Therefore, as it was reported to him that the Chouan movements indicated a concentration of their forces on Fougères, Hulot had secretly brought up, by forced marches, two battalions of his demi-brigade to this important place. The danger his country ran, his hatred of aristocracy, whose partisans were threatening a great extent of ground, and his private friendship, had combined to restore to the old soldier the fire of his youth.

"And this is the life I longed to lead!" said Mlle. de Verneuil, when she found herself alone with Francine. "Be the hours as swift as they may, they are to *me* as centuries in thought."

Suddenly she caught Francine's hand, and in a tone like that of the robin who first gives tongue after a storm, slowly uttered these words: "I cannot help it, child, I see always before me those charming lips, that short and gently upturned chin, those eyes full of fire. I hear the 'hie-up' of the postilion. In short, I dream: and why, when I wake, is my hatred so strong?"

She drew a long sigh, rose, and then for the first time bent her eyes on the country which was being delivered over to civil war by the cruel nobleman whom, without allies, she designed to attack. Enticed by the landscape she went forth to breathe the open air more freely, and if her road was chosen by chance, it must certainly have been by that black magic of our souls which makes us ground our hopes on the absurd that she was led to the public walks of the town. The thoughts conceived under the influence of this charm not seldom come true; but the foresight is then

set down to the power which men call presentiment—a power unexplained but real, which the passions find always at their service, like a flatterer who, amid his falsehoods, sometimes speaks the truth.

CHAPTER III.

A DAY WITHOUT A MORROW.

AS the concluding events of this history had much to do with the disposition of the places in which they occurred, it is indispensable to describe these places minutely: for otherwise the catastrophe would be hard to comprehend.

The town of Fougères is partly seated on a schistous rock, which might be thought to have fallen forward from the hills enclosing the great valley of the Couësnon to the west, and called by different names in different places. In this direction the town is separated from these hills by a gorge, at the bottom of which runs a small stream called the Nançon; the eastward side of the rock looks towards the same landscape which is enjoyed from the summit of the Pilgrim; and the western commands no view but the

winding valley of the Nançon. But there is a spot whence it is possible to take in a segment of the circle made by the great valley, as well as the agreeable windings of the small one which debouches into it. This spot, which was chosen by the inhabitants for a promenade, and to which Mlle. de Verneuil was making her way, was the precise stage on which the drama begun at the Vivetière was to work itself out: and so, picturesque as the other quarters of Fougères may be, attention must be exclusively devoted to the details of the scene which discovers itself from the upper part of the Promenade.

In order to give an idea of the appearance which the rock of Fougères has when viewed from this side, we may compare it to one of those huge towers round which Saracen architects have wound, tier above tier, wide balconies connected with others by spiral staircases. The rock culminates in a Gothic church, whose steeple, smaller spirelets and buttresses, almost exactly complete the sugarloaf shape. Before the gate of this church, which is dedicated to Saint Léonard, there is a small irregularly shaped square, the earth of which is held up by a wall thrown into the form of a balustrade, and communicating by a flight of steps with the public walks. This esplanade runs round the rock like a second cornice some fathoms below the Square of Saint Léonard, and affords a wide tree-planted space, which abuts on the fortifications of the town. Next, some score of yards below the walls and rocks which support this terrace itself, due partly to the chance lie of the schist, and partly to patient industry, there is a winding road called the Queen's Staircase, wrought in the rock, and leading to a bridge built over the Nançon by Anne of Brittany. Last of all, under this road, which holds the place of a third cornice, there are gardens descending in terraces to the river bank, and resembling the tiers of a stage loaded with flowers.

Parallel to the Promenade, certain lofty rocks, which take the name of the suburb whence they rise, and are called the hills of Saint Sulpice, stretch along the river, and sink in a gentle slope towards the great valley, wherein they curve sharply towards the north. These rocks, steep, barren, and bare, seem almost to touch the schists of the Promenade ; in some places they come within gunshot of them, and they protect from the northerly winds a narrow valley some hundred fathoms deep, where the Nançon, split into three arms, waters a meadow studded with buildings and pleasantly wooded.

Towards the south, at the spot where the town properly so called ends and the Faubourg Saint Léonard begins, the rock of Fougères makes a bend, grows less scarped, diminishes in height, and winds into the great valley, following the course of the river, which it thus pushes close to the hills of Saint Sulpice, and making a narrow pass, whence the water escapes in two channels and empties itself into the Couësnon. This picturesque group of rocky heights is called the Nid-aux-Crocs ; the glen which it forms is named the valley of Gibarry, and its fat meadows supply a great part of the butter known to epicures under the name of Prévalaye butter.

At the spot where the Promenade abuts on the fortifications there rises a tower called the Papegaut's Tower, and on the other side of this square building (on the summit of which is the house where Mlle. de Verneuil was lodged), there rises sometimes a stretch of wall, sometimes the rock itself, when it happens to present a sheer face : and the part of the town which is seated on this impregnable and lofty pedestal makes as it were a huge half moon, at the end of which the rocks bend and sweep away, to give passage to the Nançon. There lies the gate of Saint Sulpice, leading to the faubourg of the same name. Then, on a granite tor

commanding three valleys where many roads meet, rise the ancient crenellated towers of the feudal castle of Fougères, one of the hugest of the buildings erected by the dukes of Brittany, with walls fifteen fathoms high and fifteen feet thick. To the east it is defended by a pond, whence issues the Nançon to fill the moats and turn the mills between the drawbridge of the fortress and the Porte Saint Sulpice; to the west it is protected by the scarped masses of granite on which it rests.

Thus from the Walks to this splendid relic of the Middle Ages, swathed in its cloak of ivy and decked out with towers square or round, in each of which a whole regiment could be lodged, the castle, the town, and the rock on which it is built, all protected by straight curtains of wall or scarps of rock dressed sheer, make a huge horseshoe of precipices, on the face of which, time aiding them, the Bretons have wrought some narrow paths. Here and there boulders project like ornaments: elsewhere water drips from cracks out of which issue stunted trees. Further off, slabs of granite, at a less sharp angle than the others, support grass which attracts the goats. And everywhere the briars, springing from moist crevices, festoon the black and rugged surface with rosy garlands. At the end of what looks like a huge funnel the little stream winds in its meadow of perpetual greenery, softly disposed like a carpet.

At the foot of the castle, and amidst some knolls of granite, rises the church dedicated to Saint Sulpice, which gives its name to the suburb on the other side of the Nançon. This suburb, lying as it were at the foot of an abyss, with its pointed steeple far less in height than the rocks,[1] which seem about to fall on the church itself, and its surrounding hamlet, are picturesquely watered by some

[1] The French illustrated text has *cloches*, a misprint, and nonsense. The older editions read, properly, *roches.—Translator's Note.*

affluents of the Nançon, shaded by trees and adorned with gardens. These cut irregularly into the half moon made by the walks, the town, and the castle, and produce by their details a graceful contrast to the solemn air of the amphitheatre which they front. Finally, the whole of Fougères, with its suburbs and churches, with the hills of Saint Sulpice themselves, is framed in by the heights of Rillé, which form part of the general fringe of the great valley of the Couësnon.

Such are the most prominent features of this natural panorama, whose main character is that of savage wildness, softened here and there by smiling passages, by a happy mixture of the most imposing works of man with the freaks of a soil tormented by unlooked-for contrasts, and distinguished by an unexpectedness which produces surprise, astonishment, and almost confusion. In no part of France does the traveller see such contrasts, on such a scale of grandeur, as those which are offered by the great basin of the Couësnon and the valleys which lurk between the rocks of Fougères and the heights of Rillé. These are of the rare kind of beauties, where chance is triumphant, and which yet lack none of the harmonies of nature. Here are clear, limpid, running waters; mountains clothed with the luxuriant vegetation of the district; dark rocks and gay buildings; strongholds thrown up by nature, and granite towers built by man; all the tricks of light and shade, all the contrasts between different kinds of foliage, in which artists so much delight; groups of houses, where an active population swarms, and desert spaces, where the granite will not even tolerate the blanched mosses which are wont to cling to stone:—in short, all the suggestions which can be asked of a landscape, grace and terror, poetry full of ever new magic, sublime spectacles, charming pastorals. Brittany is there in full flower.

The tower called the Papegaut's Tower, on which the

house occupied by Mlle. de Verneuil stands, springs from the very bottom of the precipice and rises to the staircase which runs cornice-wise in front of Saint Léonard's Church. From this house, which is isolated on three sides, the eye takes in at once the great horseshoe, which starts from the tower itself, the winding glen of the Nançon, and Saint Léonard's Square. It forms part of a range of buildings, three centuries old, built of wood, and lying parallel to the north side of the church, with which they make a blind alley, opening on a sloping street which skirts the church and leads to the gate of Saint Léonard, towards which Mlle. de Verneuil was now descending.

Marie naturally did not think of going into the square in front of the church, below which she found herself, but bent her steps towards the Walks. She had no sooner passed the little green gate in front of the guard, which was then established in Saint Léonard's gate-tower, than her emotions were at once subdued to silence by the splendour of the view. She first admired the great section of the Couësnon Valley, which her eyes took in from the top of the Pilgrim to the plateau over which passes the Vitré Road. Then she rested them on the Nid-aux-Crocs and the windings of the Gibarry Glen, the crests of which were bathed by the misty light of the setting sun. She was almost startled

at the depth of the Nançon Valley, whose tallest poplars scarcely reached the garden walks underneath the Queen's Staircase. One surprise after another opened before her as she went, until she reached a point whence she could perceive both the great valley across the Gibarry Glen, and the charming landscape, framed by the horseshoe of the town, by the rocks of Saint Sulpice, and by the heights of Rillé. At this hour of the day the smoke from the houses in the suburb and the valleys made a kind of cloud in the air, which only allowed objects to be visible as if through a bluish canopy. The garish tints of day began to fade ; the firmament became pearl-grey in colour ; the moon threw her mantle of light over the beautiful abyss, and the whole scene had a tendency to plunge the soul into reverie, and help it to call up beloved images. Of a sudden she lost all interest in the shingled roofs of the Faubourg Saint Sulpice, in the church, whose aspiring steeple is lost in the depths of the valley, in the hoary draperies of ivy and clematis that clothe the walls of the old fortress, across which the Nançon boils under the mill-wheels, in the whole landscape. The setting sun in vain flung gold dust and sheets of crimson on the pretty houses scattered about the rocks, by the waters, and in the meadows, for she remained gazing motionless at the cliffs of Saint Sulpice. The wild hope which had led her to the Walks had miraculously come true. Across the *ajoncs* and the broom that grew on the opposite heights she thought she could distinguish, despite their goatskin garments, several of the guests at the Vivetière. The Gars, whose least movements stood out against the soft light of sunset, was particularly conspicuous. A few paces behind the principal group she saw her formidable foe, Madame du Gua. For an instant, Mlle. de Verneuil thought she must be dreaming, but her rival's hate soon gave her proof that the dream was alive. Her rapt

attention to the marquis's slightest gesture prevented her from observing that Madame du Gua was carefully taking aim at her with a long fowling-piece. Soon a gunshot woke the echoes of the mountains, and the bullet whistling close to Marie showed her her rival's skill.

"She leaves her card upon me!" said she to herself, with a smile.

At the same moment numerous cries of "Who goes there?" resounded from sentinel to sentinel, from the castle to the gate of Saint Léonard, and warned the Chouans of the watchfulness of the men of Fougères, inasmuch as the least vulnerable part of their ramparts was so well guarded.

"'Tis she: and 'tis he!" thought Marie. To go and seek the marquis, to follow him, to surprise him, were thoughts which came to her like flashes of lightning. "But I am unarmed!" she cried, and she remembered that at the time of leaving Paris she had put in one of her boxes an elegant dagger, which had once been worn by a sultana, and with which she chose to provide herself on her way to the seat of war, like those pleasant folk who equip themselves with notebooks to receive their impressions of travel. But she had then been less induced by the prospect of having blood to shed, than by the pleasure of wearing a pretty gemmed kandjar, and of playing with its blade, as clear as the glance of an eye. Three days earlier, when she had longed to kill herself in order to escape the horrible punishment which her rival designed for her, she had bitterly regretted having left this weapon in her box. She quickly went home, found the dagger, stuck it in her belt, drew a large shawl close round her shoulders and waist, wrapped her hair in a black lace mantilla, covered her head with a flapping Chouan hat belonging to one of the servants, and, with the presence of mind which passion sometimes lends, took the

marquis's glove which Marche-à-Terre had given her for a passport. Then, replying to Francine's alarms: "What would you have? I would go to seek *him* in hell!" she returned to the Promenade.

The Gars was still on the same spot, but alone. Judging from the direction of his telescope, he appeared to be examining with a soldier's careful scrutiny the different crossings over the Nançon, the Queen's Staircase, and the road which, starting from the gate of Saint Sulpice, winds past the church and joins the highway under the castle guns. Mlle. de Verneuil slipped into the by-paths traced by the goats and their herds on the slopes of the Promenade, reached the Queen's Staircase, arrived at the bottom of the cliff, crossed the Nançon, and traversed the suburb. Then guessing, like a bird in the desert, her way across the dangerous scarps of the Saint Sulpice crags, she soon gained a slippery path traced over granite blocks, and in spite of the broom, the prickly *ajoncs*, and the screes with which it bristled, she set herself to climb it with a degree of energy which it maybe man nevers knows, but which woman, when hurried on by passion, may for a time possess. Night overtook her at the moment when, having reached the summit, she was looking about by help of the pale moon's rays for

the road which the marquis must have taken. Persevering but fruitless explorations, and the silence which prevailed in the country, showed her that the Chouans and their chief had withdrawn. The exertion which passion had enabled her to make flagged with the hope which had inspired it. Finding herself alone, benighted, and in the midst of a country unknown to her and beset by war, she began to reflect: and Hulot's warning and Madame du Gua's shot made her shudder with fear. The stillness of night, so deep on the hills, allowed her to hear the smallest falling leaf even a great way off, and such slight noises kept vibrating in the air as though to enable her to take sad measure of the solitude and the silence. In the upper sky the wind blew fresh, and drove the clouds violently before it, producing waves of shadow and light, the effects of which increased her terror by giving a fantastic and hideous appearance to the most harmless objects. She turned her eyes to the houses of Fougères, whose homely lights burnt like so many earthly stars: and suddenly she had a distinct view of the Papegaut's Tower. The distance which she must travel in order to return to it was nothing: but the road was a precipice. She had a good enough memory of the depths bordering the narrow path by which she had come to know that she was in more danger if she retraced her steps to Fougères than if she pursued her adventure. The thought occurred to her that the marquis's glove would free her night walk from all danger if the Chouans held the country: her only formidable foe was Madame du Gua. As she thought of her, Marie clutched her dagger, and tried to make her way towards a house whose roof she had seen by glimpses as she reached the crags of Saint Sulpice. But she made slow progress, for the majestic gloom which weighs on a being who is alone in the night in the midst of a wild district, where lofty mountain-tops bow

their heads on all sides, like a meeting of giants, was new to her.

The rustle of her dress caught by the *ajoncs* made her start more than once, and more than once she hurried, slackening her pace again as she thought that her last hour was come. But before long the surroundings took a character to which the boldest men might have succumbed, and threw Mlle. de Verneuil into one of those panics which bear so hardly on the springs of life, that everything, strength or weakness, takes a touch of exaggeration in different individuals. At such times the feeblest show an extraordinary strength, and the strongest go mad with terror. Marie heard, at a short distance, curious noises at once distinct and confused, just as the night was at once dark and clear. They seemed to show alarm and tumult, the ear straining itself in vain to comprehend them. They rose from the bosom of the earth, which seemed shaken under the feet of a vast multitude of men marching. An interval of light allowed Mlle. de Verneuil to see, a few paces from her, a long file of ghastly figures, swaying like ears in a cornfield, and slipping along like ghosts. But she could only just see them, for the darkness fell again like a black curtain and hid from her a terrible picture full of yellow flashing eyes. She started briskly backwards and ran to the top of a slope, so as to escape three of the terrible shapes who were coming towards her.

"Did you see *him?*" asked one.

"I felt a cold blast as *he* passed near me," answered a hoarse voice.

"For me, I breathed the damp air and smell of a graveyard," said the third.

"Was *he* white?" went on the first.

"Why," said the second, "did *he* alone of all those who fell at the Pilgrim come back?"

"Why?" said the third, "why are those who belong to the Sacred Heart made favourites? For my part, I would rather die without confession than wander as *he* does without eating or drinking, without blood in his veins, or flesh on his bones."

"Ah!"

This exclamation, or rather cry of horror, burst from the group as one of the three Chouans pointed out the slender form and pale face of Mlle. de Verneuil, who fled with terrifying speed, and without their hearing the least noise.

"He is there!" "He is here!" "Where is he?" "There!" "Here!" "He is gone!" "No!" "Yes!" "Do you see him?" The words echoed like the dull plash of waves on the shore.

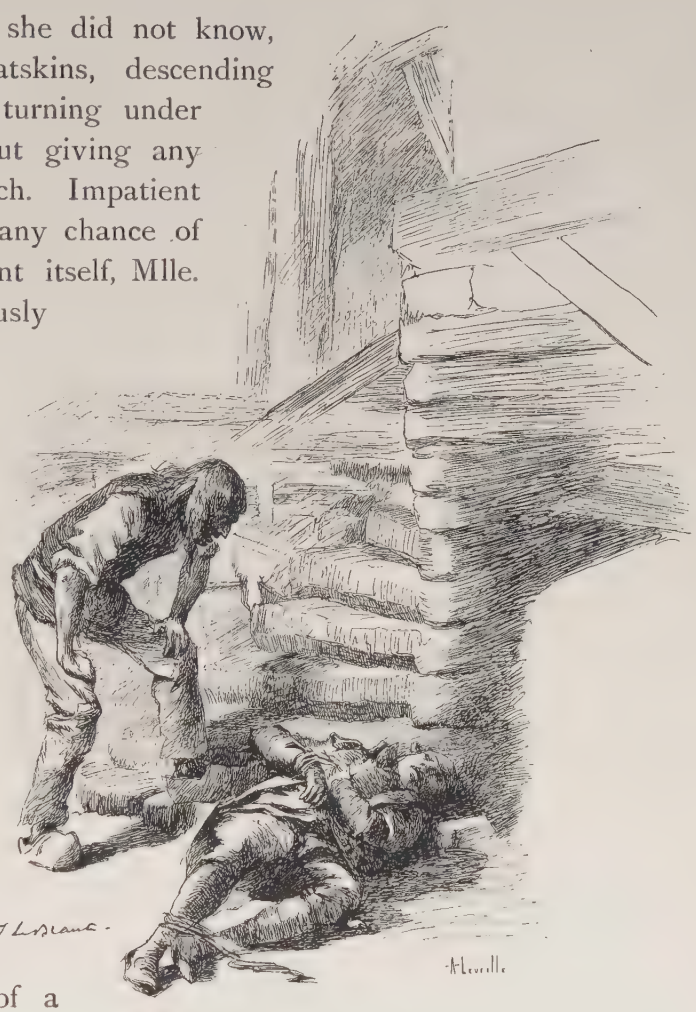
Mlle. de Verneuil stepped boldly out in the direction of

the house, and saw the indistinct forms of a multitude of persons who fled as she approached with signs of panic terror. It was as though she was carried along by an unknown power, whose influence was too much for her: and the lightness of her body, which seemed inexplicable, became a new subject of alarm to herself. These forms, which rose in masses as she came near, and as if they came from beneath the ground where they appeared to be stretched, uttered groans which were not in the least human. At last she gained, with some difficulty, a ruined garden whose hedges and gates were broken through. She was stopped by a sentinel: but she showed him her glove, and, as the moonlight shone on her face, the rifle dropped from the Chouan's hands as he levelled it at Marie, and he uttered the same hoarse cry which was echoing all over the country. She could see a large range of buildings where some lights indicated inhabited rooms, and she reached the walls without finding any obstacle. Through the very first window to which she bent her steps, she saw Madame du Gua with the chiefs who had been assembled at the Vivetière. Losing her self-command, partly at the sight, partly through her sense of danger, she flung herself sharply back on a small opening guarded by thick iron bars, and distinguished, in a long vaulted apartment, the marquis, alone, melancholy, and close to her. The reflections of the fire, before which he was sitting in a clumsy chair, threw on his face ruddy flickers which gave the whole scene the character of a vision. Trembling, but otherwise motionless, the poor girl clung close to the bars, and in the deep silence which prevailed she hoped to hear him if he spoke. As she saw him dejected, discouraged, pale, she flattered herself that she was one of the causes of his sadness. And then her wrath changed to pity, her pity to affection: and she felt all of a sudden that what had brought her there was

not merely vengeance. The marquis turned his head and stood aghast as he saw, as if in a cloud, the face of Mlle. de Verneuil ; he let slip a gesture of scorn and impatience as he cried, " Must I then see this she-devil always : even when I am awake ? "

The profound disdain which he had conceived for her drew from the poor girl a frenzied laugh, which made the young chief start ; he darted to the casement, and Mlle. de Verneuil fled. She heard close behind her the steps of a man whom she thought to be Montauran : and in order to escape him nothing seemed to her an obstacle. She could have scaled walls and flown in the air : she could have taken the road to hell itself in order to avoid reading once more in letters of fire the words " He despises you ! " which were written on the man's forehead, and which her inner voice shouted to her, as she went, with trumpet sound. After going she knew not whither, she stopped, feeling a damp air penetrate her being. Frightened at the steps of more persons than one, and urged by fear, she ran down a staircase which led her to the bottom of a cellar. When she had reached the lowest step she hearkened, trying to distinguish the direction which her pursuers were taking ; but though there was noise enough outside, she could hear the doleful groanings of a human voice, which added to her terror. A flash of light which came from the top of the stair made her fear that her persecutors had discovered her retreat : and her desire to escape them gave her new strength. She could not easily explain to herself, when shortly afterwards she collected her thoughts, in what way she had been able to climb upon the dwarf wall where she had hidden herself. She did not even at first perceive the cramped position which the attitude of her body inflicted on her. But the cramp became unbearable before long : for she looked, under a vaulted arch, like a statue of the crouch-

ing Venus stuck by an amateur in too narrow a niche. The wall, which was pretty wide and built of granite, formed a partition between the stairway itself and a cellar from whence the groans came. Soon she saw a man whom she did not know, covered with goatskins, descending beneath her, and turning under the vaulting without giving any sign of hasty search. Impatient to know whether any chance of safety would present itself, Mlle. de Verneuil, anxiously waited for the light which the stranger carried to lighten the cellar, on whose floor she perceived a shapeless but living heap, which was making endeavours to reach a certain part of the wall by a violent succession of movements, resembling the irregular writhings of a carp stranded on the bank. A small torch of resin soon diffused its bluish and uncertain light in the cellar. Despite the romantic gloom which Mlle. de Verneuil's imagination shed upon the vaults as they re-echoed the sounds of dolorous supplication, she



could not help perceiving the plain fact that she was in an underground kitchen, long disused. When the light was thrown upon the shapeless heap, it became a short and very fat man, all whose limbs had been carefully tied, but who seemed to have been left on the damp flags without further attention by those who had seized him. At sight of the stranger, who held the torch in one hand and a faggot in the other, the prisoner muttered a deep groan, which had so powerful an effect on Mlle. de Verneuil's feelings that she forgot her own terror, her despair, and the horrible cramped position of her limbs, which were stiffening from being doubled up. She did all she could to remain motionless. The Chouan threw his faggot into the fireplace after trying the strength of an old pot-hook and chain which hung down a tall iron fire-back, and lighted the wood with his torch. It was not without terror that Mlle. de Verneuil then recognized the cunning Pille-Miche, to whom her rival had delivered her up, and whose face, with the flame flickering on it, resembled the grotesque mannikins that the Germans carve in boxwood. The wail which had escaped the captive brought a huge smile on his countenance, which was furrowed with wrinkles and tanned by the sun.

"You see," he said to the victim, "that Christians like us do not break their word as you do. The fire here will take the stiffness out of your legs, and your hands, and your tongue. But there! there! I can't see a dripping-pan to put under your feet. They are so plump: they might put the fire out. Your house must be very ill furnished that a man cannot find wherewithal to serve its master properly when he warms himself!"

The sufferer uttered a sharp yell, as if he hoped to make himself heard outside the vaults, and bring a deliverer.

"Oh! you can sing to your heart's content, Monsieur d'Orgemont! They have all gone to bed upstairs, and

Marche-à-Terre is coming after me. He will shut the cellar door."

As he spoke Pille-Miche sounded with his rifle-butt the chimney-piece, the flags that paved the kitchen floor, the walls, and the stoves, to try and find the hiding-place where the miser had put his gold. The search was conducted with such skill that d'Orgemont held his breath, as if he feared to have been betrayed by some frightened servant: for, though he had not made a confidant of anyone, his ways of life might have given occasion to shrewd inferences. From time to time Pille-Miche turned sharply round to look at his victim, as if he were playing the children's game where they try to guess, by the unguarded expression of someone who has hidden a given object, whether they are "warm" or "cold." D'Orgemont pretended a certain terror as he saw the Chouan striking the stoves, which returned a hollow sound, and seemed to wish thus to amuse Pille-Miche's credulous greed for a time. At that moment three other Chouans, plunging into the staircase, made their appearance suddenly in the kitchen.

"Marie Lambrequin has come alive again!" said Marche-à-Terre, with a look and gesture which showed that all other matters of interest grew trifling beside such important news.

"I am not surprised at that," answered Pille-Miche. "He used to take the Communion so often! You would have thought that *le bon Dieu* was his private property."

"Yes! But," said Mène-à-Bien, "that did him as much good as shoes do to a dead man. It seems he had not received absolution before the affair at the Pilgrim: he had played the fool with Goguelu's girl, and thus was caught in mortal sin. So Abbé Gudin says that he will have to wait for two months as a ghost before coming back really and truly. We all of us saw him pass before us—pale, and cold, and unsubstantial, and smelling of the graveyard."

"And his reverence says, that if the ghost can get hold of anyone, he will carry him off as his mate," added the fourth Chouan. This last speaker's grotesque figure distracted Marche-à-Terre from the religious musings into which he had been plunged by a miracle, which, according to Abbé Gudin, fervent faith might repeat for the benefit of every pious defender of Church and King.

"You see, Galope-Chopine," said he to the neophyte, with some gravity, "what are the consequences of the slightest shortcoming in the duties ordered by our holy religion. Saint Anne of Auray bids us have no mercy for the smallest faults among ourselves. Your cousin Pille-Miche has begged for you the place of overseer of Fougères: the Gars consents to intrust you with it, and you will be well paid. But you know what meal we bake traitor's cake of?"

"Yes, Master Marche-à-Terre."

"And you know why I say this to you? There are people who say that you are too fond of cider and of big penny-pieces. But you must not try to make pickings: you must stick to *us*, and us only."

"Saving your reverence, Master Marche-à-Terre, cider and penny-pieces are two good things, which do not hinder a man from saving his soul."

"If my cousin makes any mistake," said Pille-Miche, "it will only be through ignorance."

"No matter how a misfortune comes," cried Marche-à-Terre, in a voice which made the vault quiver, "I shall not miss *him*. You will be surety for him," he added, turning to Pille-Miche; "for if he does wrong I shall ask an account of it at the lining of your goatskins."

"But, ask your pardon, Master Marche-à-Terre," replied Galope-Chopine, "has it not happened to you more than once to believe that Anti-Ch*uins* are Ch*uins?*"

"My friend," said Marche-à-Terre drily, "don't make that mistake again, or I will sliver you like a turnip. As for the messengers of the Gars, they will have his glove: but since that business at the Vivetière the Grande Garce puts a green ribbon in it."

Pille-Miche jogged his comrade's elbow sharply, pointing to d'Orgemont, who pretended to be asleep: but both Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche himself knew by experience that nobody had yet gone to sleep at their fireside. And though the last words to Galope-Chopine had been spoken in a low tone, since the victim might have understood them, the four Chouans all stared at him for a moment, and no doubt thought that fear had deprived him of the use of his senses. Suddenly, at a slight sign from Marche-à-Terre, Pille-Miche took off d'Orgemont's shoes and stockings, Mène-à-Bien and Galope-Chopine seized him round the body and carried him to the fire. Then Marche-à-Terre himself took one of the cords that had bound the faggot and tied the miser's feet to the pot-hook. These combined proceedings, and their incredible swiftness, made the victim utter cries which became heartrending when Pille-Miche brought the coals together under his legs.

"My friends! My good friends!" cried d'Orgemont; "you will hurt me! I am a Christian like yourselves!"

"You lie in your throat," answered Marche-à-Terre. "Your brother denied God. As for you, you bought Juvigny Abbey. Abbé Gudin says that we need feel no scruple as to roasting renegades."

"But, brethren in God, I do not refuse to pay you."

"We gave you a fortnight. Two months have passed, and here is Galope-Chopine, who has not received a farthing."

"You received nothing, Galope-Chopine?" asked the miser despairingly.

"Nothing, Monsieur d'Orgemont," answered Galope-Chopine, alarmed.

The yells, which had changed into a continuous growl, like a man's death-rattle, began again with unheard-of violence, but the four Chouans, as much used to this spec-

tacle as they were to seeing their dogs walk without shoes, gazed so coolly at d'Orgemont as he writhed and howled, that they looked like travellers waiting by an inn fire till the roast was done enough to eat.

"I am dying! I am dying!" said the victim, "and you will not get my money!"

Despite the energy of the yells, Pille-Miche noticed that the fire had not yet caught the skin: and they poked the coals very artistically, so as to make them blaze up a little, whereat d'Orgemont said in a broken voice:

"My friends! Unbind me. . . . What do you want? A hundred crowns? A thousand? Ten thousand? A hundred thousand? I offer two hundred crowns!"

The voice was so pitiful that Mlle. de Verneuil forgot her own danger and allowed an exclamation to escape her.

"Who spoke?" asked Marche-à-Terre.

The Chouans cast startled glances round them: for, brave as they were before the deadly mouths of guns, they could not stand a ghost. Pille-Miche alone listened with undistracted attention to the confession which increasing pain wrung from his victim.

"Five hundred crowns? . . . Yes! I will give them!" said the miser.

"Bah! Where are they?" observed Pille-Miche calmly.

"What? They are under the first apple-tree. . . . Holy Virgin! At the end of the garden—on the left. . . . You are brigands! robbers! Ah! I am dying. . . . There are ten thousand francs there!"

"I won't have francs," said Marche-à-Terre. "They must be livres. The Republic's crowns have heathen figures on them which will never pass."

"They are in livres, in good louis d'or. Untie me! Untie me! You know where my life is, that is to say, my treasure."

The four Chouans looked at each other, considering which of them could be trusted to go and unearth the money. But by this time their cannibal barbarity had so horrified Mlle. de Verneuil, that, without knowing whether or no the part which her pale face marked out for her would suffice to preserve her from danger, she boldly cried in a deep-toned voice: "Do you not fear the wrath of God? Untie him, savages!"

The Chouans raised their heads, saw in the air eyes which flashed like two stars, and fled in terror. Mlle. de Verneuil jumped down into the kitchen, flew to d'Orgemont,

pulled him so sharply from the fire that the faggot cords gave way, and then, drawing her dagger, cut the bonds with which he was bound. When the miser stood up a free man the first expression on his face was a laugh—one of pain, but still sardonic. "Go to the apple-tree! Go, brigands!" he said. "Aha! I have outwitted them twice. They shall not catch me a third time!"

At the same moment a woman's voice sounded without. "A ghost?" cried Madame du Gua. "Fools! 'Tis *she!* A thousand crowns to him who brings me the harlot's head!"

Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale, but the miser smiled, took her hand, drew her under the chimney-mantel, and prevented her from leaving any trace of her passage by leading her so as not to disturb the fire, which filled but a small space. He touched a spring, the iron fire-back rose, and when their common foes re-entered the cellar, the heavy door of the hiding-place had already noiselessly closed. Then the Parisian girl understood the carp-like wrigglings which she had seen the luckless banker make.

"There, madame!" cried Marche-à-Terre. "The ghost has taken the Blue for his mate!"

The alarm must have been great, for so deep a silence followed these words that d'Orgemont and his fair companion heard the Chouans whispering "*Ave Sancta Anna Auriaca gratia plena, Dominus tecum,*" etc.

"The fools are praying!" cried d'Orgemont.

"Are you not afraid," said Mlle. de Verneuil, interrupting her companion, "of discovering our——?"

A laugh from the old miser dissipated her fears. "The plate is bedded in a slab of granite ten inches thick. We can hear them and they cannot hear us."

Then taking his liberatress's hand gently, he led her towards a crack whence came puffs of fresh air: and she

understood that the opening had been worked in the chimney.

"Ah!" went on d'Orgemont, "the devil! My legs smart a little. That 'Filly of Charette,' as they call her at Nantes, is not fool enough to contradict her faithful followers; she knows well enough that if they were less brutishly ignorant, they would not fight against their own interests. There she is, praying too! it must be good to see her saying her Ave to Saint Anne of Auray! She had much better rob a coach so as to pay me back the four thousand francs she owes me. With costs and interest it comes to a good four thousand seven hundred and eighty, besides centimes."

Their prayer finished, the Chouans rose and went out. But old d'Orgemont clutched Mlle. de Verneuil's hand, to warn her that there was still danger.

"No, madame!" cried Pille-Miche, after some minutes' silence, "you may stay there ten years. They will not come back!"

"But she has not gone out, she must be here," said Charette's Filly, obstinately.

"No, madame, no! they have flown through the walls. Did not the devil carry off a priest who had taken the oath in that very place before us?"

"What, Pille-Miche! do not you, who are as much of a miser as he is, see that the old skinflint might very well have spent some thousands of livres on making a recess with a secret entrance in the foundations of these vaults?"

The miser and the young girl heard Pille-Miche give a great laugh.

"Right! very right!" said he.

"Stay here!" said Madame du Gua, "wait for them when they go out. For one gunshot I will give you all you can find in our usurer's treasury. If you wish me to forgive you for having sold the girl when I told you to kill her, obey me!"

"Usurer!" said old d'Orgemont, "and yet I charged her no more than nine per cent. 'Tis true that I had a mortgage as security. But there! you see how grateful she is. Come, madame, if God punishes us for doing ill, the devil is there to punish us for doing good, and man, placed between the two without knowledge of futurity, has always given me the idea of a problem of proportion in which x is an undiscoverable quantity."

He heaved a hollow sigh which was a characteristic of his, the air which passed through his larynx seeming to encounter and strike on two old and slack fiddle-strings. But the noise which Pille-Miche and Madame du Gua made as they once more sounded the walls, the vaulted ceiling, and the pavement, seemed to reassure d'Orgemont, who seized his deliverer's hand to help her in climbing a narrow corkscrew staircase worked in the thickness of a granite wall. When they had climbed some score of steps the feeble glimmer of

a lamp shone above their heads. The miser stopped, turned towards his companion, gazed at her face as he would have scrutinized, handled, and re-handled a bill which was risky to discount, and uttered once more his boding sigh.

"By placing you here," he said, "I have paid you back in

full the service you did me. Therefore I do not see why I should give you——"

"Sir! leave me here. I ask nothing of you," she said.

Her last words, and perhaps the disdain which her beautiful face expressed, reassured the little old man, for he answered, sighing again:

"Ah! I have done too much already by bringing you here not to go on with it."

He helped Marie politely to climb some steps of rather puzzling arrangement, and ushered her, half with a good grace, half reluctantly, into a tiny closet, four feet square,

lighted by a lamp which hung from the vaulting. It was easy to see that the miser had made all his arrangements for spending more than one day in this retreat if the events of the civil war forced him to do so.

"Do not go close to the wall, the white will come off," said d'Orgemont suddenly, and with considerable haste he thrust his hand between the young girl's shawl and the wall, which seemed to have just been re-whitened. But the old miser's gesture produced an effect quite contrary to that which he intended. Mlle. de Verneuil instantly looked straight before her, and saw in a corner a sort of erection, the shape of which drew from her a cry of terror, for she could divine that a human form had been plastered over and stood up there. D'Orgemont imposed silence on her with a terrifying look, but his little china-blue eyes showed as much alarm as his companion's.

"Silly girl! do you think I murdered him? 'Tis my brother," said he, with a melancholy variation on his usual sigh, "the first rector who took the oath. This was the only refuge where he was safe from the rage of the Chouans and of the other priests. That they should persecute a worthy man, so well-conducted! He was my elder brother, and none but he had the patience to teach me decimal notation. Ah! he was a good priest and a saving; he knew how to lay up! 'Tis four years since he died, of what disease I know not; but look you, these priests have a habit of kneeling from time to time to pray, and perhaps he could not accustom himself to standing here as I do. I bestowed him there: anywhere else they would have unearthed him. Some day I may be able to bury him in holy ground, as the poor man (who only took the oaths for fear) used to say."

A tear dropped from the little old man's dry eyes, and his red wig looked less ugly thenceforward to the young girl. She averted her eyes out of secret reverence for his

sorrow, but in spite of his emotion d'Orgemont repeated, "Don't go near the wall, you will——"

Nor did his eyes take themselves off those of Mlle. de Verneuil, as though he hoped thus to prevent her bestowing more particular attention on the side walls of the closet, where the air, half exhausted, gave scanty play to the lungs. Yet Marie succeeded in stealing a glance from the surveillance of her Argus: and from the odd bumps on the walls she came to the conclusion that the miser had built them up himself with bags of silver and gold. For a moment's space d'Orgemont had plunged into a fantastic kind of ecstasy. The pain which his scorched legs gave him, and his alarm at perceiving a human being in the midst of his treasures, were legible in every wrinkle: but at the same time his dried-up eyes expressed by their unaccustomed lustre the liberal passion which was caused in him by the dangerous vicinity of his deliveress, whose pink and white cheeks were a magnet to kisses, and whose velvety black eyes made the blood flow so hotly through his heart, that he knew not whether it presaged life or death.

"Are you married?" he asked her in a quivering voice.

"No!" she answered, with a smile.

"I am worth something," he said, heaving his sigh, "though I am not so rich as they all say. A girl like you ought to like diamonds, jewels, equipages, and gold!" he added, with a scared look round him; "I have all that to give after my death—and if you liked——?"

The old man's eye showed so much calculation even in this fleeting moment of passion, that as she shook her head negatively Mlle. de Verneuil could not help thinking that the miser's desire for her hand came chiefly from the wish to bury his secret in the heart of a second self.

"Money!" she said, throwing at d'Orgemont a sarcastic glance which at once vexed and pleased him, "money is

nothing to me. You would be thrice as rich as you are if all the money I have refused were there."

"Don't touch the w——!"

"And yet nothing was asked of me in return but a kind glance," she added, with pride unbelievable.

"You were wrong. It was a very good bargain. Why think——"

"Think *you*," interrupted Mlle. de Verneuil, "that I have just heard yonder the sound of a voice one accent of which is more precious to me than all your riches!"

"You do not know them——"

But before the miser could hinder her, Marie displaced with a finger touch a small coloured print of Louis XV. on horseback, and suddenly saw beneath her the marquis, who was busily loading a blunderbuss. The opening, hidden by the little panel on which the print was pasted, no doubt corresponded to some decoration on the ceiling of the neighbouring chamber, which appeared to be the Royalist general's bedroom. D'Orgemont, with extreme precaution, pushed the old print back and looked sternly at the damsel.

"Speak not a word, if you love your life! You have cast your grappling," whispered he after a pause, "on a pretty vessel enough. Do you know that the Marquis of Montauran has a hundred thousand livres a year in leaseholds which have not yet been sold? Now a consular decree which I have read in the Ille-et-Vilaine *Sunday Times*[1] has just put a stop to sequestrations. Aha! You think the Gars there a prettier man, do you not? Your eyes flash like a pair of new louis d'or."

Mlle. de Verneuil's glances had gained animation as she heard the well-known voice sound once more. Since she

[1] In original "*Primidi* de l'Ille-et-Vilaine," *Primidi* being the first day in each *decade* of that Republican Calendar which was one of the oddest recorded childishnesses of democracy.—*Translator's Note.*

had been in her present situation, standing as it were plunged in a gold and silver mine, the elasticity of her spirit, which had given way under the pressure of events, had renewed its vigour. She seemed to have taken a sinister resolve and to see her way to put it in execution.

"There is no recovery from such scorn as this," she was saying to herself, "and if it is written that he shall no more love me, I will kill him! no other woman shall have him!"

"No, Abbé! no," cried the young chief, whose voice now reached them, "it must be so."

"My lord marquis," objected Abbé Gudin, in a haughty tone, "you will scandalize all Brittany if you give this ball at Saint James. Preachers and not dancers are wanted to put our villages in motion. You must get fusees, not fiddles."

"Abbé, you are clever enough to know that without a general assembly of our party, I cannot find out what I can undertake with them. No kind of espionage (which, by the way, I hate) seems to me more convenient for the examination of their countenances, and the discovery of their minds, than a dinner. We will make them talk, glass in hand."

Marie started as she heard the words, for she conceived the idea of going to this ball and avenging herself there.

"Do you think I am a fool that you preach to me against dancing?" went on Montauran. "Would you not yourself figure in a chaconne with all the goodwill in the world to get re-established under your new name of Pères de la Foi? Can you be ignorant that Bretons go straight from the mass to the dance? Can you be ignorant again that

Hyde de Neuville and d'Andigné had an interview five days ago with the First Consul on the question of restoring His Majesty Louis XVIII.? If I am getting ready now to try so rash a *coup de main*, my sole reason is that I may throw the weight of our hob-nailed shoes in the scale of this negotiation. Can you be ignorant that all the Vendéan chiefs, even Fontaine, talk of surrender? Ah! sir, it is clear that the princes have been deceived as to the state of France. The devotion of which people talk to them is official devotion. Only, Abbé, if I have dipped my foot in blood, I will not plunge in it up to my waist without knowing what I am about. I have devoted myself to the King's service, and not to that of a parcel of hotheads, of men head over ears in debt like Rifoël, of *chauffeurs*,[1] of——"

"Say at once, sir," interrupted the Abbé Gudin, "of abbés who take tithes on the highway to maintain the war!"

"Why should I *not* say it?" answered the marquis sharply; "I will say more. The heroic age of La Vendée is past!"

"My lord marquis, we shall be able to do miracles without you."

"Yes, miracles like Marie Lambrequin's," said the marquis, laughing. "Come, Abbé, do not let us quarrel. I know that you are not careful of your own skin, and can pick off a Blue as well as say an *oremus*. With God's help I hope to make you take a part, mitre on head, at the King's coronation."

These last words must have had a magical effect on the Abbé, for the ring of a rifle was heard, and he cried, "My lord marquis! I have fifty cartridges in my pocket, and my life is the King's!"

[1] The plan of roasting the feet of those who were supposed to conceal treasure was common enough: but English has no single word for it like *chauffeurs*.—*Translator's Note*

"There is another of my debtors," said the miser to Mlle. de Verneuil; "I am not speaking of a wretched five or six hundred crowns that he owes me, but of a debt of blood which I hope will be paid some day. The accursed Jesuit can never have such bad luck as I wish him. He had sworn my brother's death, and he roused the whole country against him. And why? Because the poor fellow feared the new laws!"

Then, after putting his ear to a certain spot in the hiding-place, "The brigands are making off—the whole pack of them," said he; "they are going to do some other miracle. Let us hope that they will not try to bid me good-bye as they did last time, by setting fire to the house."

Some half hour later (during which time Mlle. de Verneuil and d'Orgemont gazed at each other as each might have gazed at a picture) the rough, coarse voice of Galope-Chopine cried in a low tone, "There is no more danger, M. d'Orgemont! but this time I earned my thirty crowns well!"

"My child," said the miser, "swear that you will shut your eyes."

Mlle. de Verneuil covered her eyelids with one of her hands: but to make surer still the old man blew out the lamp, took his deliveress by the hand, and helped her to take five or six steps in an awkward passage. At the end of a minute or two he gently removed her hand from her eyes, and she found herself in the room which Montauran had just quitted, and which was the miser's own.

"My dear child," said the old man, "you can go (do not stare round you like that). You are no doubt without money—here are ten crowns for you: there are clipped ones among them, but they will pass. When you come out of the garden you will find a path leading to the town, or as they say now, to the district. But the Chouans are at

Fougères, and it is unlikely that you will be able to enter there directly: so you may have need of a safe resting-place. Mark well what I am going to say to you, and only make use of it in the extremity of danger. You will see on the road which leads by the Gibarry valley to the Nid-aux-Crocs, a farm where Long Cibot, called Galope-Chopine, dwells. Go in, say to his wife, 'Good-day, Bécanière!' and Barbette will hide you. If Galope-Chopine finds you out, he will take you for the ghost if it is night, or ten crowns will tame him if it is day. Good-bye! we are quits. But if you chose," said he, pointing with a sweep of the hand to the fields surrounding his house, "all that should be yours!"

Mlle. de Verneuil cast a grateful glance on this odd being, and succeeded in drawing from him a sigh of unusually varied tone.

"Of course, you will pay me my ten crowns? (please observe that I say nothing about interest). You can pay them in to my credit with Master Patrat, the Fougères notary—who, if you chose, would draw up our marriage contract, my lovely treasure! Farewell!"

"Farewell!" said she, with a smile and a wave of her hand.

"If you want money," he cried after her, "I will lend it you at five per cent.! yes, at five merely! did I say five?" but she had gone. "She seems a nice girl," added d'Orgemont; "still, I will change the trick of my chimney." Then he took a twelve-pound loaf and a ham and went back to his hiding-place.

When Mlle. de Verneuil stepped out in the open country she felt as though new born: and the cool morning refreshed her face, which for some hours past seemed to her to have been stricken by a burning atmosphere. She tried to find the path which the miser had indicated, but since moonset the

darkness had become so intense that she was obliged to go at a venture. Soon the fear of falling among the cliffs struck a chill to her heart and saved her life : for she made a sudden stop with the presentiment that another step would find the earth yawning beneath her. The cooler breeze which kissed her hair, the ripple of the waters, as well as her own instinct, gave her a hint that she had come to the end of the rocks of Saint Sulpice. She threw her arms round a tree, and waited for the dawn in a state of lively anxiety, for she heard a noise of weapons, of horses, and of human tongues. She felt thankful to the night which protected her from the danger of falling into the hands of the Chouans if they really, as the miser had said, were surrounding Fougères.

Like bonfires suddenly kindled by night, as a signal of liberty, some gleams of faint purple ran along the mountain-tops, the lower slopes retaining a bluish tinge in contrast with the dewy clouds floating over the valleys. Soon a crimson disc rose slowly on the horizon ; the skies gave answering light ; the ups and downs of the landscape, the steeple of Saint Léonard's, the rocks, the meadows, which had been buried in shadow, re-appeared little by little, and the trees on the hilltops showed their outlines in the nascent blaze. Rising with a graceful bound, the sun shook himself free from his ribbons of flame-colour, of ochre, and of sapphire. His lively light sketched harmonies of level lines from hill to hill, and flowed from vale to vale. The gloom fled, and day overwhelmed all nature. A sharp breeze shivered through the air; the birds sang; on all sides life awoke. But the girl had hardly had time to lower her gaze to the main body of this striking landscape when, by a phenomenon common enough in these well-watered countries, sheets of mist spread themselves, filling the valleys, climbing the tallest hills, and burying the fertile basin in a cloak, as of snow. And soon Mlle. de Verneuil could fancy that she saw before

her one of those seas of ice wherewith the Alps are furnished. Then the cloudy air became billowy as the ocean, and sent up dense waves which, softly swinging to and fro, undulating and even whirling rapidly, dyed themselves with bright rosy hues from the rays of the sun, with here and there clear patches like lakes of liquid silver. Suddenly the north wind, breathing on the phantasmagoria, blew the fog away, leaving a heavy dew[1] on the turf. Then Mlle. de Verneuil could see a huge brown mass installed on the rocks of Fougères. Seven or eight hundred armed Chouans were swarming in the Faubourg Saint Sulpice like ants in an ant-heap, and the precincts of the castle, where were posted three thousand men, who had come up as if by enchantment, were furiously attacked. The town, despite its grassy ramparts and its ancient grizzled towers, might have succumbed in its sleep, if Hulot had not been on the watch. A battery, concealed on a height lying in the hollow of the ramparts, replied to the first fire of the Chouans by taking them in flank on the road leading to the castle, which was raked and swept clean by grape shot. Then a company made a sortie from the Porte Saint Sulpice, took advantage of the Chouans' surprise, formed on the roadway, and began a murderous fire on them. The Chouans did not even attempt resistance when they saw the ramparts of the castle covered with soldiers, as if the scene-painter's art had suddenly drawn long blue lines round them, while the fire of the fortress protected that of the Republican sharp-shooters. However, another party of Chouans, having made themselves masters of the little valley of the Nançon, had climbed the rocky paths and reached the Promenade, to which they mounted, the goatskins which covered it giving it the appearance of

[1] Balzac wrote "rosée *pleine d'oxyde*." I do not know what he meant by this: for though dew certainly rusts, it cannot rust turf.—*Translator's Note.*

thatch browned by time. At the same moment heavy firing was heard in that part of the town which looks toward the valley of the Couësnon. It was clear that Fougères was completely surrounded and attacked on all sides. A conflagration, which showed itself on the east face of the rock, gave evidence that the Chouans were burning the suburbs: but the showers of sparks which came from the shingled or broom-thatched roofs soon ceased, and columns of black smoke showed that the fire was going out. Once more grey and white clouds hid the scene from Mlle. de Verneuil, but the wind soon blew away this powder-fog. The Republican commander had already changed the direction of his battery, so as successively to rake the Nançon valley, the Queen's Staircase, and the rocks, as soon as he had seen from the top of the Promenade the complete success of his earlier orders. Two guns placed by the guard-house of the Porte Saint Léonard mowed down the swarms of Chouans which had carried that position, while the Fougères National Guard, which had hastily mustered in the Church Square, put the finishing touch to the rout of the enemy. The fight did not last half an hour, and did not cost the Blues a hundred men. The Chouans, beaten crushingly, were already retiring in every direction under the orders of the Gars, whose bold stroke failed, though he knew it not, as a direct consequence of the affair at the Vivetière, which had brought Hulot so secretly back to Fougères. The guns had only come up that very night: for the mere news that ammunition was on its way would have been enough to make Montauran abandon an enterprise which was certain of defeat as soon as blown upon. Indeed, Hulot was as ardently desirous of giving the Gars a smart lesson, as the Gars could be of succeeding in his dash so as to influence the decisions of the First Consul. At the first cannon-shot the marquis saw that it would be madness to go on, out of vanity, with a

surprise which was already a failure. So, to avoid useless loss of his Chouans, he promptly sent half-a-dozen messengers with instructions to effect a retreat at once on all sides. The commandant, catching sight of his foe surrounded by numerous advisers, Madame du Gua among the number, tried to send them a volley on the rocks of Saint Sulpice. But the position had been too skilfully chosen for the young chief not to be out of danger. So Hulot suddenly changed his tactics, and became the attacker instead of the attacked. At the first movement which disclosed the marquis's intentions, the company posted under the castle walls set to work to cut off the retreat, by seizing the upper passes into the Nançon valley.

Despite her hatred Mlle. de Verneuil could not help taking the side of the men whom her lover commanded: and she turned quickly towards the other end to see if it was free. But there she saw the Blues, who had no doubt gained the day on the other side of the town, returning from the Couësnon valley by the Gibarry Glen, so as to seize the Nid-aux-Crocs and the part of the rocks of Saint Sulpice where lay the lower exit of the Nançon valley. Thus the Chouans, shut up in the narrow meadow at the bottom of the gorge, seemed as if they must perish to the last man, so exact had been the foresight of the old Republican leader, and so skilfully had his measures been taken. But at these two spots the cannon which had served Hulot so well lost their efficacy, a desperate hand-to-hand struggle took place, and, Fougères once saved, the affair assumed the character of an engagement to which the Chouans were well used. Mlle. de Verneuil at once understood the presence of the masses of men she had seen about the country, the meeting of the chiefs at d'Orgemont's house, and all the events of the night: though she could not conceive how she had managed to escape so many dangers. The enterprise, prompted by

despair, interested her in so lively a manner that she remained motionless, gazing at the animated pictures before her eyes. Soon the fight below the Saint Sulpice crags acquired a new interest for her. Seeing that the Blues had nearly mastered the Chouans, the marquis and his friends flew to their aid in the Nançon valley. The foot of the rocks was covered by a multitude of furious knots of men, where the game of life and death was played on ground and with arms much more

favourable to the Goatskins. Little by little the moving arena spread itself farther out, and the Chouans, scattering, gained the rocks by the help of the bushes which grew here and there. Mlle. de Verneuil was startled to see, almost too late, her enemies once more upon the heights, where they fought furiously to hold the dangerous paths which scaled them. As all the outlets of the high ground were held by one party or the other, she was afraid of finding herself surrounded, left the great tree behind which she had kept herself, and took to flight, hoping to profit by the old miser's directions. When she had hurried a long way on the slope of the heights of Saint Sulpice towards the great

Couësnon valley, she perceived a cowshed some way off, and guessed that it belonged to the house of Galope-Chopine, who was likely to have left his wife alone during the fight. Encouraged by this guess Mlle. de Verneuil hoped to be well received in the house, and to be able to pass some hours there, till it might be possible for her to return without risk to Fougères. To judge from appearances Hulot was going to win. The Chouans fled so rapidly that she heard gun-shots all round her, and the fear of being hit by some bullet made her quickly gain the cottage whose chimney served her as a landmark. The path she had followed ended at a kind of shed, the roof of which, thatched with broom, was supported by four large tree-trunks with the bark still on. A cobbed[1] wall formed the end of the shed, in which were a cider press, a threshing-floor for buckwheat, and some ploughing gear. She stopped and leaned against one of the posts, without making up her mind to cross the muddy swamp serving as courtyard to the house, which, like a true Parisian, she had taken for a cow-stall.

The cabin, protected from the north wind by an eminence which rose above the roof and against which it rested, was not without touches of poetry, for ash-suckers, briars, and the flowers of the rocks wreathed their garlands round it. A rustic stair wrought between the shed and the house allowed the inhabitants to go and breathe a purer air on the rock-top. At the left of the cottage the hill sloped sharply down, and laid open to view a series of fields, the nearest of which, no doubt, belonged to the farm. These fields gave the effect of a pleasant woodland, divided by banks of earth which were planted with trees, and the nearest of which helped to surround the courtyard. The lane which led to the fields was closed by a huge tree-trunk, half-rotten, a

[1] *Torchis*, or "cob," as it is called on the opposite coast of Devonshire, is clay mixed with straw.—*Translator's Note.*

kind of Breton gateway, the name of which may serve later as text for a final digression on local colour. Between the stair wrought in the schist and the lane, with the swamp in

front and the hanging rock behind, some granite blocks, roughly hewn, and piled the one on the other, formed the four corner-stones of the house and held up the coarse bricks, the beams, and the pebbles of which the walls were

built. Half the roof was thatched with broom instead of straw, and the other half was shingled with slate-shaped pieces of wood, giving promise of an interior divided in two parts. And in fact one, with a clumsy hurdle as a door, served as stall: while the owners of the house inhabited the other. Though the cabin owed to the neighbourhood of the town some conveniences which were completely wanting a league or two further off, it showed well enough the unstable kind of life to which war and feudal customs had so sternly subjected the manners of the serfs, so that to this day many peasants in these parts give the term "abode" only to the chateau which their landlord inhabits. After examining the place with astonishment which may easily be imagined, Mlle. de Verneuil noticed here and there in the courtyard mud some pieces of granite so arranged as to serve as stepping-stones towards the house—a mode of access not devoid of danger. But as she heard the roll of the musketry drawing audibly nearer, she skipped from stone to stone, as if crossing a brook, to beg for shelter. The house was shut in by one of those doors which are in two separate pieces, the lower of solid and massive wood, while the upper is filled by a shutter serving as window. Many shops in the smaller French towns exhibit this kind of door, but much more ornamented, and provided in the lower part with an alarm-bell. The present specimen opened with a wooden latch worthy of the Golden Age, and the upper part was never shut except at night, for this was the only opening by which the light of day could enter the room. There was, indeed, a roughly-made casement: but its glass seemed to be composed of bottle ends, and the leaden latticing which held them occupied so much of the space that it seemed rather intended to keep light out than to let it in. When Mlle. de Verneuil made the door swing on its creaking hinges, whiffs of an appalling ammoniacal odour issued to meet her from

the cottage, and she saw that the cattle had kicked through the interior partition. Thus the inside of the farm—for farm it was—did not match ill with the outside. Mlle. de Verneuil was asking herself whether it was possible that human beings could live in this deliberate state of filth, when a small ragged boy, apparently about eight or nine years old, suddenly showed his fresh white and red face, plump cheeks, bright eyes, teeth like ivory, and fair hair falling in tresses on his half-naked shoulders. His limbs were full of vigour, and his air had that agreeable wonder and savage innocence which makes children's eyes look larger than nature. The boy was perfectly beautiful.

"Where is your mother?" said Marie, in a gentle voice, and stooping to kiss his eyes.

When he had had his kiss, the child slipped away from her like an eel, and disappeared behind a dunghill which lay between the path and the house on the rise of the hill. Indeed Galope-Chopine, like many Breton farmers, was accustomed, by a system of cultivation which is characteristic of them, to put his manure in elevated situations, so that when it comes to be used the rain has deprived it of all its virtues. Left to her own devices in the dwelling for a moment or two, Marie was not long in taking stock of its contents. The room in which she waited for Barbette was the only one in the house; the most prominent and stately object in it was a huge chimney-piece, the mantel of which was formed of a slab of blue granite. The etymology of the word[1] justified itself by a rag of green serge edged with a pale green ribbon, and cut out in rounds, hanging down the slab, in the midst of which stood a Virgin in coloured plaster. On the pedestal of the statue Mlle. de Verneuil read two verses of a sacred poem very popular in the country:—

[1] *Manteau*, "cloak."—*Translator's Note.*

"I am God's mother, *full of grace*,[1]
And the protectress of this place."

Behind the Virgin, a hideous picture, blotched with red and blue by way of colouring, presented Saint Labre. A bed, also of green serge, of the shape called tomb-shaped, a rough cradle, a wheel, some clumsy chairs, and a carved dresser furnished with some utensils, completed, with a few exceptions, the movable property of Galope-Chopine. In front of the casement there was a long chestnut-wood table with two benches in the same wood, to which such light as came through the glass gave the tint of old mahogany. An enormous cider cask, under whose spile Mlle. de Verneuil noticed some yellowish mud the moisture of which was slowly rotting the floor, though it was composed of fragments of granite set in red clay, showed that the master of the house well deserved his Chouan nickname (Galope-Chopine, "tosspot"). Mlle. de Verneuil lifted her eyes as if to relieve them of this spectacle, and then it seemed to her that she saw all the bats in the world—so thick were the spiders' webs which hung from the ceiling. Two huge *pichets* full of cider stood on the long table. These vessels are a kind of jug of brown earth, the curious pattern of which is found in more than one district of France, and which a Parisian can imagine by fancying the jars in which epicures serve up Brittany butter, with the belly somewhat swollen, varnished here and there in patches and shaded over with dark yellow like certain shells. The jugs end in a sort of mouth not unlike that of a frog taking in air above water. Marie's attention had fixed on these pitchers, but the noise of the fighting, which sounded more and more distinct, urged her to seek a place more suitable for hiding without waiting for Barbette, when the woman suddenly appeared.

[1] Words inserted, "*rhymi* gratia."—*Translator's Note.*

"Good day, Bécanière!" said she to her, suppressing an involuntary smile, as she saw a face which was not unlike the heads that architects place as ornaments over the keystones of window-arches.

"Aha! you come from d'Orgemont," answered Barbette, with no great air of alacrity.

"Where are you going to put me? for the Chouans are coming!"

"There!" said Barbette, equally astounded at the beauty and the strange dress of a creature whom she dared not take for one of her own sex. "There! in the priest's hole."

She led her to the head of her own bed and made her go into the alcove. But they were both startled by hearing a stranger plashing through the swamp. Barbette had scarcely time to draw a bed-curtain and wrap Marie up in it, when she found herself face to face with a fugitive Chouan.

"Old woman! where can one hide here? I am the Comte de Bauvan."

Mlle. de Verneuil shuddered as she recognized the voice of the guest whose words—few as they were, and secret as they had been kept from her—had brought about the disaster at the Vivetière.

"Alas! monseigneur, you see there is nothing of the kind here. The best I can do is to go out and keep watch. If the Blues come I will warn you. If I stayed here and they found me with you, they would burn my house."

And Barbette left the room: for she was not clever enough to adjust the claims of two mutual enemies who were, thanks to her husband's double part, equally entitled to the use of the hiding-place.

"I have two shots still to fire," said the count despairingly, "but they have got in front of me already. Never

mind! I shall be much out of luck if as they come back this way they take a fancy to look under the bed!"

He put his gun gently down by the bed-post where Marie was standing wrapped in the green serge, and he stooped to make sure that he could find room under the bed. He must infallibly have seen the feet of the concealed girl, but in

this supreme moment she caught up his gun, leapt briskly into the open hut, and threatened the count, who burst out laughing as he recognized her; for in order to hide herself Marie had discarded her great Chouan hat, and her hair fell in thick tufts from underneath a lace net.

"Don't laugh, count! you are my prisoner! If you make a single movement you shall know what an offended woman is capable of."

While the count and Marie were staring at each other

with very different feelings, confused voices shouted from the rocks, "Save the Gars! Scatter yourselves! Save the Gars! Scatter yourselves!"

Barbette's voice rang over the tumult outside, and was heard in the cottage with very different sensations by the two foes. For she spoke less to her son than to them.

"Don't you see the Blues?" cried Barbette sharply. "Are you coming here, wicked little brat! or shall I come to you? Do you want to be shot? Get away quickly!"

During these details, which took little time, a Blue jumped into the swamp. "Beau-Pied!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil to him.

Beau-Pied ran in at her voice, and took rather better aim at the count than his deliveress had done.

"Aristocrat!" said the sly soldier, "don't stir, or I will demolish you like the Bastile in two jiffies!"

"Monsieur Beau-Pied," continued Mlle. de Verneuil in a coaxing tone, "you will answer to me for this prisoner. Do what you like with him: but you must get him safe and sound to Fougères for me."

"Enough, madame!"

"Is the road to Fougères clear now?"

"It is safe enough: unless the Chouans come alive again."

Mlle. de Verneuil armed herself gaily with the light fowling-piece, smiled sarcastically as she said to her prisoner, "Good-bye, Monsieur le Comte, we meet again," and fled to the path after putting on her great hat once more.

"I see," said the count bitterly, "a little too late, that one ought never to make jests on the honour of women who have none left."

"Aristocrat!" cried Beau-Pied harshly, "if you don't want me to send you to that *ci-devant* paradise of yours, say nothing against that fair lady!"

Mlle. de Verneuil returned to Fougères by the paths which connect the crags of Saint Sulpice and the Nid-aux-

Crocs. When she reached this latter eminence and was hastening along the winding path which had been laid in the rough granite, she admired the beautiful little valley of the Nançon, just before so noisy, now perfectly quiet. From where she was the valley looked like a green lane. She entered the town by the gate of Saint Léonard, at which the little path ended. The townsmen—still alarmed by the fight, which, considering the gunshots heard afar off, seemed likely to last throughout the day—were awaiting the return of the National Guard in order to learn the extent of their losses. When the men of Fougères saw the girl in her strange costume, her hair dishevelled, a gun in her hand, her shawl and gown whitened by contact with walls, soiled with mud and drenched with dew, their curiosity was all the more vividly excited in that the power, the beauty, and the eccentricity of the fair Parisian already formed their staple subject of conversation.

Francine, a prey to terrible anxiety, had sat up for her mistress the whole night, and when she saw her she was about to speak, but was silenced by a friendly gesture :

"I am not dead, child," said Marie. "Ah! when I left Paris I pined for exciting adventures—I have had them," added she after a pause. But when Francine was about to go and order breakfast, remarking to her mistress that she must be in great need of it, Mlle. de Verneuil cried "Oh no! A bath! A bath first! The toilette before all :" and Francine was not a little surprised to hear her mistress ask for the most elegant and fashionable dresses which had been packed up. When she had finished her breakfast, Marie set about dressing with all the elaborate care which a woman is wont to bestow on this all-important business when she has to show herself in the midst of a ball-room to the eyes of a beloved object. The maid could not understand her mistress's mocking gaiety. It was not the joy of

loving (for no woman can mistake that expression), it was concentrated spite, which boded ill. Marie arranged the curtains of the window, whence the eye fell on a magnificent panorama: then she drew the sofa near the fireplace, set it in a light favourable to her face, bade Francine get flowers so as to give the room a festal appearance, and when they were brought, superintended their disposal in the most effective manner. Then, after throwing a last glance of satisfaction on her apartment, she told Francine to send to the commandant and ask for her prisoner. She stretched herself voluptuously on the couch, half for the sake of resting, half in order that she might assume an attitude of frail elegance, which in certain women has an irresistible fascination. Her air of languid softness, the provoking arrangement of her feet, the tips of which just peeped from the skirt of her gown, the *abandon* of her body, the bend of her neck, even the angle formed by her taper fingers, which hung from a cushion like the petals of a tuft of jasmine, made up, with her glances, a harmony of allurement. She burnt some perfumes to give the air that soft influence which is so powerful on the human frame, and which often smooths the way to conquests which women wish to gain without apparently inviting them. A few moments later the old soldier's heavy step echoed in the antechamber:

"Well! commandant, where is my captive?"

"I have just ordered out a picket of twelve men to shoot him as one taken arms in hand."

"What! you have settled the fate of my prisoner?" she said. "Listen, commandant! I do not think, if I may trust your face, that the death of a man in cold blood is a thing particularly delightful to you. Well then, give me back my Chouan, and grant him a reprieve for which I will be responsible. I assure you that this aristocrat has become indispensable to me, and that he will help in executing our

projects. Besides, to shoot a man like this, who is playing at *Chouannerie*, would be as silly a thing as to send a volley at a balloon which needs only a pin-prick to shrivel it up. For God's sake, leave cruelty to aristocrats: Republics should be generous. Would you not, if it had lain with you, have pardoned the victims of Quiberon and many

others? There, let your twelve men go and make the rounds, and come and dine with me and my prisoner. There is only another hour of daylight, and you see," added she, with a smile, "if you are not quick, my toilette will miss its effect."

"But, mademoiselle——" said the commandant in surprise.

"Well, what? I know what you mean. Come, the count shall not escape you. Sooner or later the plump butterfly will burn his wings in your platoon fire."

The commandant shrugged his shoulders slightly like a man who is forced to obey, willy nilly, the wishes of a pretty

woman: and came back in half an hour, followed by the Comte de Bauvan.

Mlle. de Verneuil pretended to be caught unawares by her guests, and showed some confusion at being seen by the count in so careless an attitude. But as she saw in the nobleman's eyes that her first attack had succeeded, she rose and devoted herself to her company with the perfection of grace and politeness. Nothing forced or studied in her posture, her smile, her movements, or her voice, betrayed a deliberate design. Everything was in harmony: and no exaggeration suggested that she was affecting the manners of a society in which she had not lived. When the Royalist and the Republican had taken their seats, she bent a look of severity on the count. He knew women well enough to be aware that the insult of which he had been guilty was likely to be rewarded with sentence of death. But though he suspected as much, he preserved the air, neither gay nor sad, of a man who at any rate does not expect any such tragic ending. Soon it seemed to him absurd to fear death in the presence of a beautiful woman, and finally Marie's air of severity began to put notions in his head.

"Who knows," thought he to himself, "if a count's coronet, still to be had, may not please her better than a marquis's that is lost? Montauran is a dry stick enough: while I——" and he looked at himself with satisfaction, "Now the least that I can gain is to save my head!"

But his diplomatic reflections did not do him much good. The liking which he had made up his mind to feign for Mlle. de Verneuil became a violent fancy which the dangerous girl took pleasure in stimulating.

"Count," she said, "you are my prisoner, and I have the right to dispose of you. Your execution will not take place without my consent, and, as it happens, I am too full of curiosity to let you be shot now."

"But suppose I were to be obstinately discreet?" answered he, merrily.

"With an honest woman perhaps you might, but with a 'wench!' Come, come, count, that would be impossible."

These words, full of bitter irony, were hissed out (as Sully says, speaking of the Duchess of Beaufort) from so sharp a beak that the nobleman in his surprise merely gazed at his ferocious adversary.

"Come," she went on mockingly, "not to contradict you, I will be, like these creatures, 'a kind girl.' To begin with, here is your gun." And she handed him his weapon with a gesture of gentle sarcasm.

"On the faith of a gentleman, mademoiselle, you are acting——"

"Ah!" she said, breaking in, "I have had enough of the faith of gentlemen. That was the assurance on which I entered the Vivetière. Your chief swore to me that I and mine should be safe there!"

"Infamous!" cried Hulot, with frowning brows.

"It was M. le Comte's fault," she said, pointing to him. "The Gars certainly meant quite sincerely to keep his word; but this gentleman threw on me some slander or other which confirmed all the tales that 'Charette's filly' had been kind enough to imagine."

"Mademoiselle," said the count, disordered, "if my head were under the axe, I could swear that I said but the truth——"

"In saying what?"

"That you had been the——"

"Out with the word! The mistress——"

"Of the Marquis (now Duke) of Lenoncourt, who is one of my friends," said the count.

"Now I might let you go to execution," said Marie, unmoved in appearance by the deliberate accusation of the

count, who sat stupefied at the real or feigned indifference which she showed towards the charge. But she went on, with a laugh, "Dismiss for ever from your mind the sinister image of these pellets of lead! For you have no more offended me than this friend of yours whose—what is it? Fie on me—you would have me to have been. Listen, count, have you not visited my father, the Duke de Verneuil? Eh?"

Thinking, no doubt, that the confidence which she was about to make was of too great importance for Hulot to be admitted to it, Mlle. de Verneuil beckoned the count to her and said some words in his ear. M. de Bauvan let slip a half-uttered exclamation of surprise and looked with a puzzled air at Marie, who suddenly completed the memory to which she had appealed by leaning against the chimney-piece in a child's attitude of innocent simplicity. The count dropped on one knee.

"Mademoiselle!" he cried, "I implore you to grant me pardon, however unworthy I may be of it."

"I have nothing to forgive," she said. "You are as far from the truth now in your repentance as you were in your insolent supposition at the Vivetière. But these secrets are above your understanding. Know only, count," added she, gravely, "that the Duke de Verneuil's daughter has too much loftiness of soul not to take a lively interest in you."

"Even after an insult?" said the count, with a sort of regret.

"Are not some persons too highly placed to be within the reach of insult? Count, I am one of them."

And as she spoke these words the girl assumed an air of noble pride, which overawed her prisoner and made the whole comedy much less clear to Hulot. The commandant put his hand to his moustache as though to twist it up, and looked with a somewhat disturbed air at Mlle. de Verneuil, who gave him to understand by a sign that she was making no change in her plan.

"Now," she said, after an interval, "let us talk. Francine, give us lights, child."

And she brought the conversation very cleverly round to that time which a few short years had made the *ancien régime*. She carried the count back to this period so well by the vivacity of her remarks and her sketches, she supplied him with so many occasions of showing his wit by the complaisant ingenuity with which she indulged him in repartees, that he ended by thinking to himself that he had never been more agreeable, and, his youth restored by the notion, he tried to communicate to this alluring person the good opinion which he had of himself. The malicious girl took delight in trying upon him all the devices of her coquetry, and was able to play the game all the more skilfully that for her it was a game and nothing more. And

so at one moment she let him believe that he had made a quick advance in her favour, at another, as though astonished at the liveliness of her feelings, she showed a coldness which charmed the count, and helped sensibly to increase his impromptu passion. She behaved exactly like an angler who from time to time pulls up his line to see if a fish has bitten. The poor count allowed himself to be caught by the innocent manner in which his deliveress had accepted a compliment or two, neatly turned enough. The emigration, the Republic, Brittany, the Chouans, were things a thousand miles away from his thoughts. Hulot sat bolt upright, motionless and solemn as the god Terminus. His want of breeding incapacitated him entirely for this style of conversation. He had, indeed, a shrewd suspicion that the two speakers must be very droll people, but his intelligence could soar no higher than the attempt to understand them so far as to be sure that they were not plotting against the Republic under cover of ambiguous language.

"Mademoiselle," said the count, "Montauran is well-born, well-bred, and a pretty fellow enough: but he is absolutely ignorant of gallantry. He is too young to have seen Versailles. His education has been a failure, and instead of playing mischievous tricks, he is a man to deal dagger-blows. He can love fiercely, but he will never acquire the perfect flower of manners by which Lauzun, Adhémar, Coigny, and so many others were distinguished. He does not possess the pleasing talent of saying to women those pretty nothings which after all suit them better than explosions of passion, whereof they are soon tired. Yes! though he be a man who has been fortunate enough with the sex, he has neither the ease nor the grace of the character."

"I did not fail to perceive it," answered Marie.

"Aha!" said the count to himself, "that tone and look meant that we shall soon be on the very best terms together:

and, faith! in order to be hers I will believe anything she wishes me to believe!"

Dinner being announced, he offered his hand to her. Mlle. de Verneuil did the honours of the meal with a politeness and tact which could only have been acquired by a court education and in the polished life of the court.

"You had better go," said she to Hulot, as they rose from table, "you would frighten him; while if we are alone I shall soon find out what I want to know. He has come to the pitch where a man tells me everything he thinks, and sees everything through my eyes."

"And afterwards?" asked the commandant, as if demanding the extradition of his prisoner.

"Oh! he must be free," said she, "free as air!"

"Yet he was caught with arms in his hands."

"No," said she, with one of the jesting sophistries which women love to oppose to peremptory reason, "I had disarmed him before. Count," she said to the nobleman, as she re-entered the room, "I have just begged your freedom, but nothing for nothing!" she added, with a smile and a sidelong motion of her head, as if putting questions to him.

"Ask me for anything, even my name and my honour!" he cried, in his intoxication. "I lay all at your feet!" and he darted forward to grasp her hand, endeavouring to represent his desire as gratitude. But Mlle. de Verneuil was not a girl to mistake the two; and therefore, smiling all the while, so as to give some hope to this new lover, but stepping back a pace or two, she said, "Will you give me cause to repent my trust?"

"A girl's thoughts run faster than a woman's," he replied, laughing.

"A girl has more to lose than a woman."

"True: those who carry treasures should be mistrustful."

"Let us drop this talk," said she, "and speak seriously. "You are going to give a ball at Saint James. I have been told that you have established there your stores, your arsenals, and the seat of your government. When is the ball?"

"To-morrow night."

"You will not be surprised, sir, that a slandered woman should wish, with a woman's obstinacy, to obtain a signal reparation for the insults which she has undergone in the presence of those who witnessed them. Therefore I will go to your ball. I ask you to grant me your protection from the moment I appear there to the moment I leave. I will not have your word," said she, noticing that he was placing his hand on his heart. "I hate oaths; they are too like precautions. Simply tell me that you will undertake to hold my person scatheless from all criminal or shameful attempt. Promise to redress the wrong you have done me by announcing that I am really the Duke de Verneuil's daughter, and by holding your tongue about all the ills I owed to a lack of paternal protection. We shall then be quits. What? Can a couple of hours' protection given to a lady at a ball be too heavy a ransom? Come! you are worth no more!" But she took all the bitterness out of her words with a smile.

"What do you ask then for my gun's ransom?" said the count with a laugh.

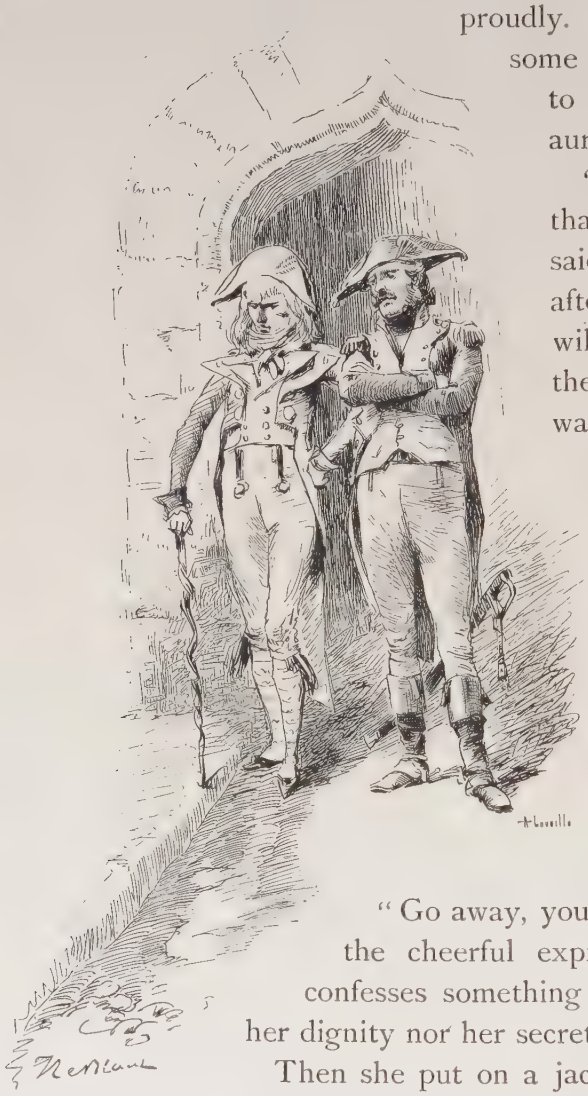
"Oh! more than for yourself."

"What?"

"Secrecy. Believe me, Bauvan, only women can detect women. I know that if you say a word I may be murdered on the road. Yesterday certain bullets gave me warning of the danger I have to run on the highway. That lady is as clever at the chase as she is deft at the toilette. No waiting-maid ever undressed me so quickly. For heaven's sake,"

she said, "take care that I have nothing of that kind to fear at the ball."

"You will be under my protection there!" said the count proudly. "But," he asked with some sadness, "are you going to Saint James for Montauran's sake?"



"You want to know more than I know myself!" she said with a laugh, adding, after a pause, "Now go! I will myself escort you out of the town: for you all wage war like mere savages here."

"Then you care a little for me?" cried the count. "Ah, mademoiselle, allow me to hope that you will not be insensible to my friendship, for I suppose I must be content with that, must I not?" he added, with an air of coxcombry.

"Go away, you conjurer!" said she, with the cheerful expression of a woman who confesses something that compromises neither her dignity nor her secrets.

Then she put on a jacket and accompanied the count to the Nid-aux-Crocs. When she had come to the end of the path she said to him, "Sir! observe the most absolute secrecy, even with the marquis," and she placed her finger on her lips. The count, emboldened by

her air of kindness, took her hand (which she let him take as though it were the greatest favour) and kissed it tenderly:

"Oh! mademoiselle," cried he, seeing himself out of all danger, "count on me in life and in death. Though the gratitude I owe you is almost equal to that which I owe my mother, it will be very difficult for me to feel towards you only respect."

He darted up the path, and when she had seen him gain the crags of Saint Sulpice, Marie nodded her head with a satisfied air, and whispered to herself, "The fat fellow has given me more than his life for his life. I could make him my creature at very small expense. Creature or creator, that is all the difference between one man and another!"

She did not finish her sentence, but cast a despairing glance to heaven, and slowly made her way back to the Porte Saint Léonard, where Hulot and Corentin were waiting for her.

"Two days more!" she cried, "and——"

But she stopped, seeing that she and Hulot were not alone, "and he shall fall under your guns," she whispered to the commandant. He stepped back a pace, and gazed with an air of satire not easy to describe, on the girl whose face and bearing showed not a touch of remorse. There is in women this admirable quality, that they never think out their most blameworthy actions. Feeling carries them along: they are natural even in their very dissembling, and in them alone crime can be found without accompanying baseness, for in most cases "they know not what they do."

"I am going to Saint James, to the ball given by the Chouans, and——"

"But," said Corentin, interrupting her, "it is five leagues off. Would you like me to go with you?"

"You are very busy," said she to him, "with a subject of which I never think—with yourself!"

The contempt which Marie showed for Corentin pleased Hulot particularly, and he made his grimace as she vanished towards Saint Léonard's. Corentin followed her with his eyes, showing in his countenance a silent consciousness of the fated superiority which, as he thought, he could exercise over this charming creature, by governing the passions on which he counted to make her one day his. When Mlle. de Verneuil got home she began eagerly to meditate on her ball dresses. Francine, accustomed to obey without ever comprehending her mistress's objects, rummaged the band-boxes, and proposed a Greek costume—everything at that time obeyed the Greek influence. The dress which Marie settled upon would travel in a box easy to carry.

"Francine, my child, I am going to make a country excursion. Make up your mind whether you will stay here or come with me."

"Stay here!" cried Francine, "and who is to dress you?"

"Where did you put the glove which I gave you back this morning?"

"Here it is."

"Sew a green ribbon in it: and, above all, take money with you." But when she saw that Francine had in her hands newly coined pieces, she cried, "You have only to do that if you want to get us murdered! Send Jeremy to wake Corentin, but no—the wretch would follow us. Send to the commandant instead, to ask him, from me, for crowns of six francs."

Marie thought of everything with that woman's wit which takes in the smallest details. While Francine was finishing the preparations for her unintelligible departure, she set herself to attempt the imitation of the owl's hoot, and succeeded in counterfeiting Marche-à-Terre's signal so as to deceive anybody. As midnight struck she sallied from the Porte Saint Léonard, gained the little path on the Nid-

aux-Crocs, and, followed by Francine, ventured across the valley of Gibarry, walking with a steady step, for she was inspired by that strong will which imparts to the gait and to the body an air of power. How to leave a ball-room without catching a cold is for women an important matter; but let them feel passion in their hearts, and their body becomes as it were of bronze. It might have taken even a daring man a long time to resolve on the undertaking, yet it had scarcely showed its first aspect to Mlle. de Verneuil when its dangers became attractions for her.

"You are going without commending yourself to God!" said Francine, who had turned back to gaze at Saint Léonard's steeple.

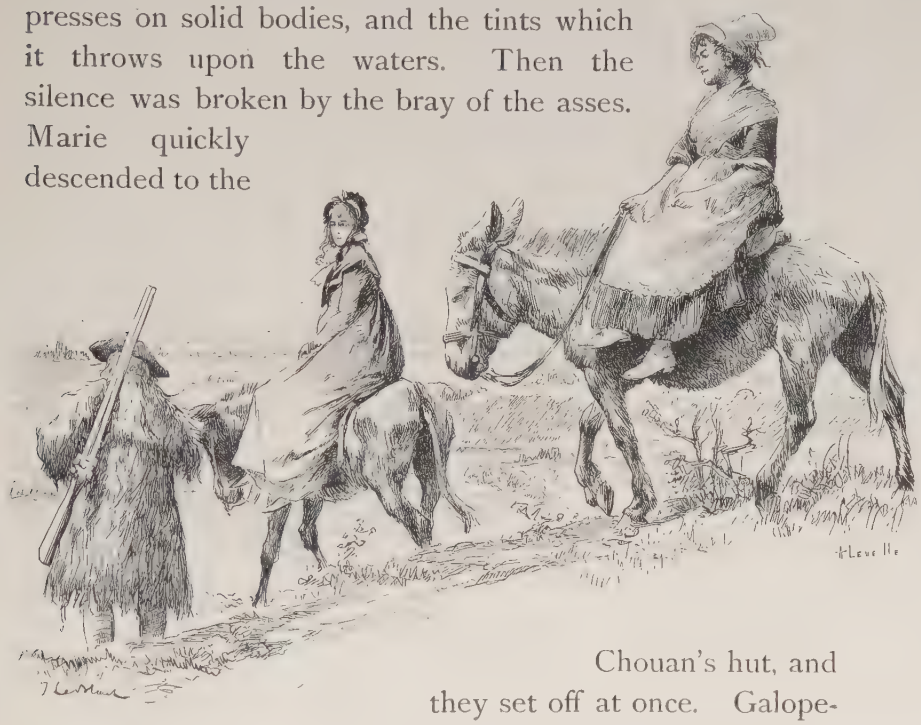
The pious Breton girl halted, clasped her hands, and said an Ave to Saint Anne of Auray, begging her to bless the journey; while her mistress stood lost in thought, looking by turns at the simple attitude of her maid, who was praying fervently, and at the effects of the misty moonlight which, gliding through the carved work of the church, gave to the granite the lightness of filigree. The two travellers lost no time in reaching Galope-Chopine's hut; but light as was the sound of their steps, it woke one of the large dogs to whose fidelity the Bretons commit the guardianship of the plain wooden latch which shuts their doors. The dog ran up to the two strangers, and his bark became so threatening that they were obliged to cry for help and retrace their steps some way. But nothing stirred. Mlle. de Verneuil whistled the owl's hoot: at once the rusty door-hinges creaked sharply in answer, and Galope-Chopine, who had hastily risen, showed his sombre face.

"I have need," said Marie, presenting Montauran's glove to the *surveillant* of Fougères, "to travel quickly to Saint James. The Count de Bauvan told me that you would act as my guide and protector thither. Therefore, my dear

Galope-Chopine, get us two donkeys to ride, and be ready to bear us company. Time is precious, for if we do not reach Saint James before to-morrow evening we shall see neither the Gars nor the ball."

Galope-Chopine took the glove with a puzzled air, turned it this way and that, and kindled a candle made of resin as thick as the little finger and of the colour of gingerbread. These wares, imported into Brittany from the north of Europe, show, like everything that meets the eye in this strange country, ignorance of even the commonest commercial principles. After inspecting the green ribbon, and staring at Mlle. de Verneuil, after scratching his ear, after drinking a pitcher of cider himself and offering a glass of it to the fair lady, Galope-Chopine left her before the table on the bench of polished chestnut wood, and went to seek two donkeys. The deep blue light which the outlandish candle cast was not strong enough to master the fantastic play of the moonbeams that varied with dots of light the dark colourings of the floor and furniture of the smoky cabin. The little boy had raised his startled head, and just above his fair hair two cows showed, through the holes in the stable-wall, their pink muzzles and their great flashing eyes. The big dog, whose countenance was not the least intelligent of the family group, appeared to be examining the two strangers with a curiosity equal to that of the child. A painter might have spent a long time in admiring the effects of this night-piece, but Marie, not anxious to enter into talk with Barbette, who was sitting up in bed like a spectre, and began to open her eyes very wide as she recognized her visitor, went out to escape at once the pestiferous air of the hovel and the questions which "La Bécanière" was likely to put to her. She climbed with agility the staircase up the rock which sheltered Galope-Chopine's hut, and admired the vast assembly of details in a landscape where the point of view changed with

every step forwards or backwards, upwards or downwards. At the moment the moonlight enveloped the valley of the Couësnon as with luminous fog, and sure enough a woman who carried slighted love in her heart must have relished the melancholy which this soft light produces in the soul by the fantastic shapes which it impresses on solid bodies, and the tints which it throws upon the waters. Then the silence was broken by the bray of the asses. Marie quickly descended to the



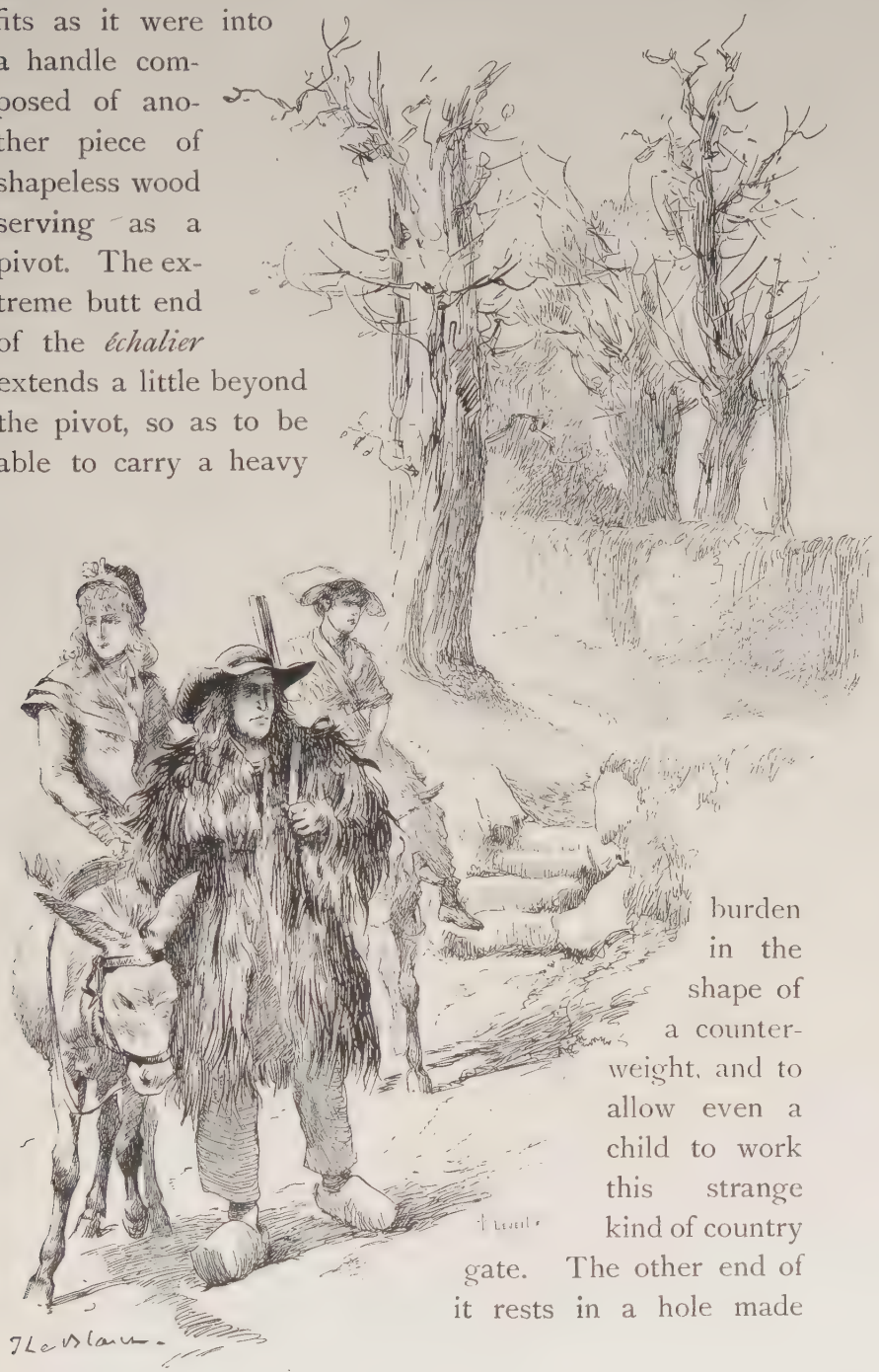
Chouan's hut, and they set off at once. Galope-Chopine, who was armed with a double-barrelled fowling-piece, wore a goatskin, which gave him the appearance of Robinson Crusoe. His wrinkled and pimpled countenance was scarcely visible under the broad hat which the peasants still keep as a vestige of old time, feeling pride at having gained in spite of their serfdom the sometime decoration of lordly heads. This nocturnal procession, guarded by a guide whose dress, attitude, and general appearance had something patriarchal, resembled the scene of the Flight into Egypt, which we owe to the sombre

pencil of Rembrandt. Galope-Chopine avoided the highway with care, and guided the travellers through the vast labyrinth of the Breton cross-roads.

Then Mlle. de Verneuil began to understand the Chouan fashion of warfare. As she traversed these roads she could better appreciate the real condition of districts which, seen from above, had appeared to her so charming, but which must be penetrated in order to grasp their danger and their inextricable difficulty. Around each field the peasants have raised, time out of mind, an earthen wall, six feet high, of the form of a truncated pyramid, on the top whereof chestnut trees, oaks, and beeches grow. This wall, planted after such a fashion, is called a "hedge"—the Norman style of hedge—and the long branches of the trees which crown it, flung as they almost always are over the pathway, make a huge arbour overhead. The roadways, gloomily walled in by these clay banks or walls, have a strong resemblance to the fosse of a fortress, and when the granite, which in this country almost always crops up flush with the surface of the ground, does not compose a kind of uneven pavement, they become so impassable that the smallest cart cannot travel over them without the help of a pair of oxen or horses, small but generally stout. These roads are so constantly muddy that custom has established for foot passengers a path inside the field and along the hedge—a path called a *rote*, beginning and ending with each holding of land. In order to get from one field to another it is thus necessary to climb the hedge by means of several steps, which the rain often makes slippery enough.

But these were by no means the only obstacles which travellers had to overcome in these tortuous lanes. Each piece of land, besides being fortified in the manner described, has a regular entrance about ten feet wide and crossed by what is called in the west an *échalier*. This is the trunk or

a stout branch of a tree, one end of which, drilled through, fits as it were into a handle composed of another piece of shapeless wood serving as a pivot. The extreme butt end of the *échalier* extends a little beyond the pivot, so as to be able to carry a heavy



burden in the shape of a counterweight, and to allow even a child to work this strange kind of country gate. The other end of it rests in a hole made

on the inside of the hedge. Sometimes the peasants economize the counterweight-stone by letting the heavy end of the trunk or branch hang over. The style of the barrier is altered according to the fancy of each owner. It often consists of a single branch, the two ends of which are socketed into the hedge by earth; often also it looks like a square gate built up of several thin branches fixed at intervals like the rungs of a ladder set crosswise. This gate turns like the *échalier* itself, and its other end plays on a small wheel of solid wood. These hedges and gates give the ground the appearance of a huge chessboard, each field of which makes an enclosure completely isolated from the rest, walled in like a fortress, and like it possessing ramparts. The gate, easy to defend, gives the assailant the least easy of all conquests: for the Breton peasant thinks that he fertilizes his fallows by allowing them to grow huge broom bushes—a shrub which finds such congenial treatment in this district that it soon grows to the height of a man. This notion—worthy of people who put their manure on the highest patch of their farmyards—keeps upon the soil in one field out of every four, forests of broom, in the midst of which all manner of ambuscades can be arranged. And, to conclude, there is hardly a field where there are not some old cider-apple trees dropping their branches low over it and killing the crops which they cover. Thus, if the reader will remember how small the fields are where every hedge supports far ranging trees, whose greedy roots monopolize a fourth of the ground, he will have an idea of the agricultural arrangement and general appearance of the country which Mlle. de Verneuil was now traversing.

It is difficult to say whether anxiety to avoid disputes about title, or the custom, dear to laziness, of shutting in cattle without having to herd them, has most to do with the construction of these formidable enclosures, whose enduring

obstacles make the country impenetrable, and forbid all war with large bodies of men. When the lie of the ground has been examined step by step, it is clear what must be the fated ill-success of a war between regular and irregular troops: for five hundred men might laugh at the army of a kingdom. In this was the whole secret of the Chouan war. And Mlle. de Verneuil at once understood the need which the Republic had of stifling disorder by means of police and diplomacy rather than by the useless use of military force. What could be done indeed against men clever enough to scorn the holding of towns, and make sure of holding the country with its indestructible fortifications? How do aught but negotiate when the whole strength of these blinded peasants lay in a skilful and enterprising chief? She admired the genius of the minister who had guessed in his study the secret of peace: she thought she could see the considerations working on men powerful enough to hold a whole empire under their glance, and whose deeds, criminal to the vulgar eye, are only the workings of a vast thought. These awe-inspiring souls are divided, one knows not how, between the power of fate and destiny, and they possess a foresight the first evidence of which exalts them. The crowd looks for them amongst itself, then lifts its eyes and sees them soaring above it. This consideration appeared to justify and even to ennoble the thoughts of vengeance which Mlle. de Verneuil had formed: and in consequence her reflections and her hopes gave her energy enough to bear the unwonted fatigues of her journey. At the end of each property Galope-Chopine was obliged to make the two travellers dismount and to help them to climb the difficult stiles: while, when the *rotes* came to an end, they had to get into the saddle again and venture into the muddy lanes, which already gave tokens of the approach of winter. The joint action of the great trees, of the hollow ways, and of the

field-enclosures kept up in the lower grounds a dampness which often wrapped the travellers as in a cloak of ice. After toilsome exertions they reached by sunrise the woods of Marignay, and the journey in the wide forest path then became less difficult. The vault of branches and the thickness of the tree-trunks sheltered the voyagers from the inclemency of the sky, and the manifold difficulties which they had at first to surmount disappeared.

They had scarcely journeyed a league across the wood when they heard afar off a confused murmur of voices and the sound of a bell, whose silvery tinkle was free from the monotonous tone given by cattle as they walk. As he went along Galope-Chopine listened to this music with much attention, aud soon a gust of wind brought to his ear a snatch of psalmody which seemed to produce a great effect on him. He at once drove the weary beasts into a path diverging from that which would lead the travellers to Saint James: and he turned a deaf ear to the representations of Mlle. de Verneuil, whose fears increased with the gloomy character of the landscape.

To right and left huge granite rocks, piled the one on the other, presented singular outlines, while between them enormous roots crawled like great snakes in search of distant nourishment for immemorial beeches. The two sides of the road resembled those subterranean grottoes which are famous for their stalactites. Vast festoons of ivy,[1] among which the dark verdure of holly and of heath mingled with the greenish or whitish patches of moss, veiled the crags and the entrance of some deep caves. When the three travellers had gone some steps in a narrow path a most surprising spectacle presented itself to Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes, and explained to her Galope-Chopine's obstinacy.

[1] The text has *pierre*, which is nonsense. *Lierre* is *certissima emendatio.* —*Translator's Note.*

A semi-circular basin, wholly composed of masses of granite, formed an amphitheatre on whose irregular tiers tall black pines and yellowing chestnuts rose one above the other like a great circus, into which the wintry sun seemed rather to instil a pale colouring than to pour its light, and where autumn had already thrown the tawny carpet of its withered leaves on all sides. In the middle of this hall, which seemed to have had the deluge for its architect, there rose three enormous druidic stones, composing a vast altar upon which was fastened an old church banner. Some hundred men knelt, bareheaded and fervently praying, in the enclosure, while a priest, assisted by two other ecclesiastics, was saying mass. The shabbiness of the sacred vestments, the thin voice of the priest, which scarcely murmured an echo through space, the devout congregation unanimous in sentiment, and prostrate before an altar devoid of pomp, the cross bare of ornament, the stern rusticity of the temple, the hour, the place—all gave to the scene the character of simplicity which distinguished the early ages of Christianity. Mlle. de Verneuil was and remained struck with admiration. This mass said in the heart of the woods, this worship driven by persecution back to its own sources, this poetry of ancient times boldly contrasted with natural surroundings of fantastic strangeness, these Chouans at once armed and unarmed, cruel and devout, childlike and manly,—the whole scene, in short, was unlike anything that she had before seen or imagined. She remembered well enough that in her childhood she had admired the pomp of the Roman Church, which appeals so cunningly to the senses: but she had never yet seen God alone, his cross on the altar, his altar on the bare ground, the autumn trees supporting the dome of heaven in place of the fretted mouldings which crown the Gothic arches of cathedrals, the sun stealing with difficulty its ruddy rays and duller reflections upon the altar, the

priest and the congregation, instead of the thousand hues flung by stained glass. Here men represented a fact, and not a system, here was prayer and not formality. But human passions, whose momentary suppression gave the picture all its harmony, soon reappeared in this scene of mystery and infused in it a powerful animation.

The gospel was drawing to a close as Mlle. de Verneuil came up. With no small alarm she recognized in the celebrant the Abbé Gudin, and hid herself quickly from his sight, availing herself of a huge fragment of granite for a hiding-place, into which she briskly drew Francine. But she tried in vain to tear Galopé-Chopine from the place which he had chosen in order to share in the advantages of the ceremony. She entertained, however, hopes of being able to escape the danger which threatened her when she noticed that the nature of the ground gave her the opportunity of withdrawing before the rest of the congregation. By the help of a wide crack in the rock she could see Abbé Gudin mounting a mass of granite which served him as pulpit. He began his sermon in these terms:

"*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!*"

At which words the whole congregation piously made the sign of the cross.

"My dear brethren," the abbé went on in a loud voice, "let us first pray for the dead. Jean Cochegrue, Nicolas Laferté, Joseph Brouet, François Parquoi, Sulpice Coupiau: —all of this parish, who died of the wounds they received at the fight on the Pilgrim and at the siege of Fougères."

Then was recited the "De Profundis" according to custom, by the congregation and the priests antiphonally, and with a fervour which gave good augury of the success of the preaching. When this psalm for the dead was finished, Abbé Gudin went on in a voice of ever-increasing strength,

for the old Jesuit did not forget that energy of delivery was the most powerful of arguments to persuade his uncultivated hearers.

"Christians!" he said, "these champions of God have set you an example of your duty. Are you not ashamed of what they may be saying of you in Paradise? But for those blessed ones who must have been received there with open arms by all the saints, our Lord might believe that your parish is inhabited by followers of Mahound![1] Do you know, my gars, what they say of you in Brittany and at Court? You do not know it, do you? Then I will tell you: they say:—'What! the Blues have thrown down the altars, they have killed the rectors, they have murdered the king and the queen, they would fain take all the parishioners of Brittany to make Blues of them like themselves, and send them to fight far from their parishes, in distant lands where men run the risk of dying without confession, and so going to hell for all eternity. And do the gars of Marignay, whose church they have burnt, stay with their arms dangling by their sides? Oh! Oh! This Republic of the damned has sold the goods of God and the seigneurs by auction, it has shared the price among its Blues, and now, in order to feast on money as it has feasted on blood, it has just resolved to take three livres on each crown of six francs, just as it levies three men out of every six. And have not the gars of Marignay caught up their guns to drive the Blues out of Brittany? Aha! The door of Paradise shall be shut on them, and they shall never again be able to gain salvation.' That is what they are saying of you. So, Christian brethren, it is your salvation which is at stake: you will save your souls by fighting for the faith and for the king. Saint Anne of Auray herself appeared to me yesterday at half-past two. She said to me, just as I tell it to you, 'You are a priest of Marig-

[1] *Mahumétisches.—Translator's Note.*

nay?' Yes, madame, at your service. 'Well, then, I am Saint Anne of Auray, aunt of God after the fashion of Brittany. I am still at Auray, but I am here, too, because I have come to bid you tell the gars of Marignay that they have no salvation to hope for if they do not take up arms. Therefore you shall refuse them absolution of their sins if they will not serve God. You shall bless their guns, and those gars who are sinless shall not miss the Blues, because their guns are holy.' And she disappeared, leaving a smell of incense under the Goosefoot Oak. I made a mark at the spot, and the rector of Saint James has put up a fair wooden Virgin there. What is more, the mother of Pierre Leroy, called Marche-à-Terre, came to pray there in the evening, and was cured of her pains because of her son's good works. There she is in the midst of you: and you can see her with your own eyes walking alone. This miracle has been done, like the resurrection of the blessed Marie Lambrequin, to show you that God will never desert the cause of Bretons when they fight for His servants and for the king. Therefore, dear brethren, if you would save your souls, and show yourselves champions of your lord the king, you must obey the orders of him whom the king has sent, and whom we call the Gars. Then shall you no more be like the followers of Mahound, and men will find you with all the gars of all Brittany, under the banner of God. You can take back out of the Blues' pockets all the money they have stolen: for if, while you fight, your fields be not sown, the Lord and the king make over to you the spoils of your enemies. Shall it be said, Christian brethren, that the gars of Marignay are behind the gars of Morbihan, of Saint Georges, of Vitré, of Antrain, who are all serving God and the king? Will you leave them all the booty? Will you stay like heretics with folded arms while so many Bretons secure their salvation and save their king? 'Ye shall give up all for me,' the

Gospel says. Have not *we* already given up the tithes? Do you then give up all in order to make this holy war! You shall be like the Maccabees; all your sins shall be forgiven you: you shall find your rectors and their curates in your midst: and you shall triumph! Pay attention to

this, Christian brethren," concluded he, "to-day, to-day only we have the power of blessing your guns. Those who do not avail themselves of this grace will not find the Holy One of Auray so merciful another time; and she will not listen to them as she did in the last war!"

This sermon, supported by the thunder of obstreperous lungs and by a variety of gesticulations which made the

speaker perspire, had in appearance little effect. The peasants, standing motionless, with eyes rivetted on the orator, looked like statues. But Mlle. de Verneuil soon perceived that this general attitude was the result of the spell which the abbé had cast over the crowd. He had, like all great actors, swayed his whole auditory as one man by appealing to their interests and their passions. Had he not given them absolution for their excesses beforehand, and cast loose the ties which still kept these wild men to the observance of social and religious laws? True, he had prostituted his priesthood to political purposes: but in these times of revolution each man made what he had a weapon in the cause of his party, and the peace-giving cross of Jesus was beaten into a sword as well as the food-giving ploughshare. As she saw no being before her who could enter into her feelings, she turned to Francine, and was not a little surprised to see her sharing the enthusiasm and telling her beads devoutly on the rosary of Galope-Chopine, who had no doubt lent it to her during the sermon.

"Francine," she said in a low tone, "are you too afraid of being a *Mahumétische?*

"Oh, mademoiselle!" replied the Breton girl, "look at Pierre's mother walking there!" and Francine's attitude showed such profound conviction that Marie understood at once the secret of this preaching, the influence of the clergy in the country districts, and the wonderful results of such scenes as now began. The peasants nearest to the altar advanced one by one and knelt down, presenting their pieces to the preacher, who laid them on the altar, Galope-Chopine being one of the first to offer his old duck gun. The three priests then chanted the hymn *Veni Creator*, while the celebrant enveloped the murderous implements in a cloud of bluish incense smoke, weaving what seemed interlaced patterns with it. As soon as the wind had dissipated this smoke,

the guns were given back in succession, and each man received his own kneeling from the hands of the priests, who recited a Latin prayer as they returned the pieces. When the armed men had returned to their places, the deep enthusiasm of the congregation, speechless till then, broke out in a manner at once terrible and touching.

Domine, salvum fac regem!

Such was the prayer which the preacher thundered with echoing voice, and which was sung twice over with vehement shouts which were at once wild and warlike. The two notes of the word *regem*, which the peasants translated without difficulty, were poured out with such energy that Mlle. de Verneuil could not help thinking with emotion of the exiled Bourbons. Their memory evoked that of her own past life, and she recalled the festivities of the Court, now scattered far and wide, but in which she herself had been a star. The form of the marquis intruded itself into this reverie, and with the rapid change of thought natural to women, she forgot the spectacle before her, and returned to her projects of vengeance—projects where life was at stake and which might be wrecked by a glance. While meditating how to make herself beautiful in this the most critical moment of her existence, she remembered that she had nothing to wear in her hair at the ball, and was enticed by the notion of wearing a holly branch—the crinkled leaves and scarlet berries of which caught her attention at the moment.

"Aha!" said Galope-Chopine, nodding his head contentedly, "my gun may miss if I fire at birds now: but at Blues, never!"

Marie looked more curiously at her guide's face, and found it typical of all those she had just seen. The old Chouan seemed to be more destitute of ideas than an average child. His cheeks and brow wrinkled with simple joy as he looked at his gun: but the expression of this joy was tinged with a

fanaticism which for a moment gave his savage countenance a touch of the faults of civilization.

Soon they reached a village, or rather a collection of four or five dwellings resembling that of Galope-Chopine: and the newly-recruited Chouans arrived there while Mlle. de Verneuil was finishing a meal composed solely of bread, butter, milk, and cheese. This irregular band was led by the rector, who held in his hand a rude cross in guise of a standard, and was followed by a gars, proud of his post as parish ensign. Mlle. de Verneuil found it necessary to join this detachment, which was, like herself, making for Saint James, and which protected her as a matter of course from all danger from the moment when Galope-Chopine, with lucky indiscretion, told the leader that the pretty *garce* whom he was guiding was a dear friend of the Gars.

About sunset the travellers arrived at Saint James, a little town owing its name to the English who built it in the fourteenth century, when they were masters of Brittany. Before entering it, Mlle. de Verneuil witnessed a singular military spectacle, to which she paid little attention, fearing to be recognized by some of her enemies, and hastening her steps owing to this fear. Five or six thousand peasants were encamped in a field. Their costumes, which pretty closely resembled those of the requisitionaries at the Pilgrim, had nothing in the least warlike about them: and their tumultuous assembly was like that at a great fair. It was even needful to look somewhat narrowly in order to discover that these Bretons were armed, for their goatskins, differently arranged as they were, almost hid their guns, and their most visible weapon was the scythe with which some supplied the place of the guns which were to be served out to them. Some ate and drank: some fought or loudly wrangled: but most of them lay asleep on the ground. There was no semblance of order or of discipline. An officer in red uniform caught

Mlle. de Verneuil's eye, and she supposed that he must be in the English service. Further off, two other officers seemed to be trying to instruct some Chouans, more intelligent than the rest, in the management of two cannon which

appeared to constitute the whole park of artillery of the Royalist army that was to be. The arrival of the gars of Marignay, who were recognized by their banner, was greeted with yells of welcome: and under cover of the excitement which the troop and the rectors aroused in the camp, Mlle. de Verneuil was able to cross it and enter the town without danger. She betook herself to an inn of modest appearance, and not far from the house where the ball was to be held:

but the town was so crowded that, with the greatest possible trouble, she could only obtain a small and inconvenient room. When she was established there, and when Galope-Chopine had handed to Francine the bandbox containing her mistress's clothes, he remained standing in an indescribable attitude of expectancy and irresolution. At another time Mlle. de Verneuil might have amused herself with the spectacle of a Breton peasant out of his own parish. But she broke the spell by taking from her purse four crowns of six francs each which she presented to him. "Take them," she said, "and if you will do me a favour, go back at once to Fougères without passing through the camp, and without tasting cider."

The Chouan, astounded at such generosity, shifted his eyes by turns from the crowns he had received to Mlle. de Verneuil: but she waved her hand and he departed.

"How can you send him away, mademoiselle?" asked Francine. "Did you not see how the town is surrounded? How are we to get away? And who will protect us here?"

"Have you not got a protector?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, with a low mocking whistle, after the manner of Marche-à-Terre, whose ways she tried to imitate.

Francine blushed and smiled rather sadly at her mistress's merriment.

"But where is *your* protector?" she said.

Mlle. de Verneuil drew her dagger with a brusque movement, and showed it to the terrified Breton girl, who dropped on a chair with clasped hands.

"What have you come to look for here, Marie?" she cried in a beseeching voice, but one which did not call for an answer.

Mlle. de Verneuil, who was busying herself in twisting about the holly twigs she had gathered, said only: "I am not sure whether this holly will look really well in my hair.

A face must be as bright as mine is to endure so dark a headdress. What do you think, Francine?"

Not a few other remarks of the same kind indicated that the strange girl was perfectly unconcerned as she made her

toilette: and anyone overhearing her would have had some difficulty in understanding the gravity of the crisis in which she was risking her life. A dress of India muslin, rather short, and clinging like damp linen, showed the delicate outlines of her shape. Then she put on a red over-skirt, whose folds, numerous and lengthening as they fell to one side, had the graceful sweep of a Greek tunic. This passion-provoking garment of pagan priestesses lessened the indelicacy of the

costume which the fashion of the day permitted to women in dressing, and, to reduce it still further, Marie threw a gauze veil over her white shoulders, which the tunic left bare all too low. She twisted the long plaits of her hair so as to form at the back of her head the truncated and flattened cone which by artificially lengthening the head gives such grace to the appearance of certain antique statues, while a few curls, left loose above the forehead, fell on each side of her face in long glistening ringlets. In such a garb and headdress she exactly resembled the most famous masterpieces of the Greek chisel. When she had by a smile signified her approbation of this coiffure, whose least detail set off the beauties of her face, she placed on it the holly wreath which she had arranged, and the numerous scarlet berries of which happily reproduced in her hair the shade of her tunic. As she twisted some of the leaves so as to make fantastic contrast between their two sides, Mlle. de Verneuil contemplated the whole of her toilette in the glass to judge its effect.

"I am hideous to-night," she said (as if she were in a circle of flatterers). "I look like a statue of Liberty."

Then she carefully stuck the dagger in the centre of her corset, so that the rubies of its hilt might protrude, and by their ruddy reflections attract eyes to the beauties which her rival had so unworthily violated. Francine could not make up her mind to quit her mistress, and when she saw her ready to start, she devised pretexts for accompanying her out of all the obstacles which ladies have to overcome when they go to a merrymaking in a little town of Lower Brittany. Must she not be there to relieve Mlle. de Verneuil of her cloak, of the over-shoes which the mud and dirt of the streets made it necessary (though the precaution of spreading gravel over them had been taken) for her to wear, and of the gauze veil in which she hid her head from the gaze of the Chouans whom curiosity brought round the house where the festival

took place? The crowd was so great that the two girls walked between rows of Chouans. Francine made no further attempt to keep her mistress back: but having put the last touches to a toilette whose merit consisted in its extreme freshness, she remained in the courtyard that she might not leave her to the chances of her fate without being able to fly to her help. For the poor girl foresaw nothing but misfortune.

A sufficiently curious scene was taking place in Montauran's apartment while Marie made her way to the ball. The young marquis was finishing his toilette, and putting on the broad red ribbon which was to indicate him as the most prominent personage in the assembly, when the Abbé Gudin entered with a troubled air.

"My lord marquis," said he, "pray come quickly. You alone can calm the storm which has arisen, I hardly know on what occasion, among our chiefs. They are talking of quitting the king's service. I believe that devil of a Rifoël to be the cause of the whole disturbance, for brawls of this kind are always brought about by some folly They tell me that Madame du Gua upbraided him with coming to the ball very ill dressed."

"The woman must be mad!" cried the marquis, "to wish——"

"The Chevalier du Vissard," went on the abbé, cutting his leader short, "replied that if you had given him the money which was promised him in the king's name——"

"Enough, abbé, enough! I understand the whole thing now. The scene was arranged beforehand, was it not? and you are the ambassador——"

"I!" continued the abbé, interrupting again, "I, my lord marquis! I am going to give you the heartiest support, and I trust you will do me the justice to believe that the re-establishment of our altars in France, the restoration of the

king to the throne of his fathers, are far more powerful stimulants of my humble efforts than that bishopric of Rennes which you——"

The abbé dared not finish, for a bitter smile had come upon the marquis's face. But the young leader immediately choked down the sad thoughts which came to him, his brow assumed a stern look, and he followed the Abbé Gudin into a room echoing with noisy clamour.

"I acknowledge no man's authority here!" cried Rifoël, casting fiery glances at all those around him, and laying his hand on his sword-hilt.

"Do you acknowledge the authority of common sense?" asked the marquis coolly. And the young Chevalier du Vissard, better known by his family name of Rifoël, was silent before the commander-in-chief of the Catholic armies.

"What is the matter, gentlemen?" said the young leader, scrutinizing the faces of the company.

"The matter is, my lord marquis," answered a famous smuggler—with the awkwardness of a man of the people who is at first hampered by the restraints of prejudice in the presence of a grand seigneur, but who knows no limits when he has once crossed the barrier which separates them and sees before him only an equal—"The matter is that you have come just at the nick of time. I am not good at gilded words: so I will speak plumply and plainly. Throughout the last war I commanded five hundred men. Since we took up arms once more I have been able to put at the king's service a thousand heads as hard as my own. For seven long years I have been risking my life for the good cause. I am not throwing it in your teeth: but the labourer is worthy of his hire. Therefore, to begin with, I would be called M. de Cottereau, and I would have the rank of colonel accorded to me, otherwise I shall tender my submission to the First Consul. You see, my lord marquis,

I and my men have a devil of a dunning creditor whom we must satisfy. He is here!" he added, striking his stomach.

"Has the band come?" asked the marquis of Madame du Gua, in a mocking tone.

But the smuggler had broached, however brutally, too important a subject, and these bold spirits, as calculating as they were ambitious, had been already too long in doubt as to what they might hope from the king, for mere disdain on the young chief's part to close the incident. The young and fiery Chevalier du Vissard started briskly before Montauran and seized his hand to prevent his moving.

"Take care, my lord marquis!" said he, "you treat too lightly men who have some right to the gratitude of him

whom you represent here. We know that his majesty has given you full powers to put on record our services which are to be rewarded in this world—or the next, for the scaffold stands ready for us every day. I know for my part that the rank of maréchal de camp[1]——"

"You mean colonel?"

"No, marquis, Charette made me colonel. The rank I have mentioned is my incontestable right: and therefore I do not speak for myself at this moment, but for all my bold brethren in arms whose services have need of recognition. For the present, your signature and your promise will content them, and," he added, dropping his voice, "I confess that they are easily contented. But," he went on, raising it again, "when the sun rises on the Palace of Versailles, bringing happier days for the monarchy, will those faithful men who have helped the king to conquer France in France —will they be easily able to obtain favours for their families, pensions for their widows, the restoration of the estates which have been so wrongfully confiscated? I doubt it. Therefore, my lord marquis, attested proof of service will not be useless then. I will never mistrust the king, but I very heartily distrust his cormorants of ministers and courtiers, who will din into his ears considerations about the public welfare, the honour of France, the interests of the crown, and a hundred other rubbishy phrases. Men will make mock then of a brave Vendéan or Chouan because he is old and because the blade he has drawn for the good cause beats against legs wizened by suffering. Can you say we are wrong?"

"You speak admirably well, M. du Vissard," answered the marquis, "but a little prematurely."

"Hark you, marquis," whispered the Count de Bauvan,

[1] As nearly as possible = brigadier-general, except that this latter is, as a rule, local and temporary.—*Translator's Note.*

"Rifoël has, by my faith! said very pretty things. For your part, you are sure of always having the king's ear; but as for us, we shall only visit our master at long intervals, and I confess to you, that if you were to refuse your word as a gentleman to obtain for me in due time and place the post of Grand Master of the Waters and Forests of France, devil take me if I would risk my neck! It is no small thing to gain Normandy for the king, and so I think I may fairly hope to have the Order.[1] But," he added, with a blush, "there is time to think of all that. God keep me from imitating these rascals, and worrying you. You will speak of me to the king, and all will go right."

Then each chief managed to inform the marquis in a more or less ingenious fashion of the extravagant price which he expected for his services. One modestly asked for the Governorship of Brittany, another for a barony, a third for promotion, a fourth for the command of a place, and all wanted pensions.

"Why, baron!" said the marquis to M. de Guénic, "do *you* want nothing?"

"Faith! marquis, these gentlemen have left me nothing but the crown of France, but perhaps I could put up with that!"

"Why, gentlemen!" said the Abbé Gudin, in his thundering voice, "remember that if you are so eager, you will spoil all in the day of victory. Will not the king be forced to make concessions to the Revolutionaries themselves?"

"To the Jacobins?" cried the smuggler. "If his majesty will leave them to me, I will undertake to employ my thousand men in hanging them, and we shall soon get them off our hands!"

"Monsieur *de* Cottereau," said the marquis, "I perceive that some invited guests are entering the room. We ought all to vie in zeal and pains so as to induce them to join our holy enterprise: and you must understand that it is not the

[1] *L'Ordre* by itself usually means the *Saint Esprit.—Translator's Note.*

time to attend to your demands, however just they may be." And as he spoke he made his way towards the door as if to welcome some nobles from the neighbouring country of whom he had caught sight. But the bold smuggler barred his way, though with a submissive and respectful air.

"No! no! my lord marquis, excuse me, but the Jacobins

taught us too well in 1793 that the man who reaps the harvest is not the man who eats the cake. Sign this strip of paper, and to-morrow I will bring you fifteen hundred gars. If not, I shall treat with the First Consul."

Throwing a haughty glance round him, the marquis saw that the old guerilla's boldness and resolute air were not displeasing to any of the spectators of the dispute. One man only, who sat in a corner, seemed to take no part in the scene, and was busily filling a white clay pipe with tobacco. The contemptuous air with which he regarded

the spokesmen, his unassuming attitude, and the compassion for himself which the marquis read in his eyes, made Montauran scrutinize this generous-minded servant, in whom he recognized Major Brigaut. The chief walked quickly up to him :

" And you," he said, " what is *your* demand ? "

" Oh ! my lord marquis, if the king comes back, I shall be satisfied."

" But for yourself ? "

" For myself ? Your lordship is joking."

The marquis squeezed the Breton's horny hand, and said to Madame du Gua, near whom he was standing, " Madame, I may fail in my enterprise before having time to send the king an exact report as to the state of the Catholic army in Brittany. If you live to see the Restoration, forget neither this honest fellow nor the Baron du Guénic. There is more devotion in those two than in all these people here."

And he pointed to the chiefs who were waiting, not without impatience, for the young marquis to comply with their demands. They all held in their hands open papers, in which, it would seem, their services had been certified by the Royalist leaders in former wars ; and a general murmur began to rise from them. In their midst the Abbé Gudin, the Baron du Guénic, and the Comte de Bauvan were consulting how to aid the marquis in checking such exaggerated pretensions : for they could not but think the chief's position a very awkward one.

Suddenly the marquis ran his blue eyes, with an ironic flash in them, over the company, and said, in a clear voice : " Gentlemen, I do not know whether the powers which the king has graciously entrusted to me are wide enough to enable me to satisfy your demands. He may not have anticipated so much zeal and devotion ; you shall judge for yourselves of my duty, and perhaps I shall be able to do it."

He disappeared, and came back promptly, holding in his hand an open letter bearing the royal seal and sign manual.

"Here," he said, "are the letters patent in virtue of which your obedience is due to me. They authorize me to govern the provinces of Brittany, Normandy, Maine, and Anjou in the king's name, and to take cognizance of the services of officers who distinguish themselves in his majesty's armies."

A movement of content passed through the assembly, and the Chouans came nearer to the marquis, respectfully encircling him, with their eyes bent on the king's signature. But the young chief, who was standing before the chimney-piece, suddenly threw the letter in the fire, where, in a moment, it was consumed.

"I will no more command," cried the young man, "any but those who see in the king a king, and not a prey to be devoured. Gentlemen, you are at liberty to leave me!"

Madame du Gua, Abbé Gudin, Major Brigaut, the Chevalier du Vissard, the Baron du Guénic, the Comte de Bauvan, gave an enthusiastic cry of *Vive le Roi*, and if at first the other chiefs hesitated for a moment to echo it, they were soon carried away by the marquis's noble conduct, begged him to forget what had happened, and assured him that, letters patent or none, he should always be their chief.

"Let us go and dance!" cried the Comte de Bauvan, "come what may! After all, friends," added he merrily, "it is better to pray to God himself than to His saints. Let us fight first, and see what happens afterwards."

"That is very true," whispered Major Brigaut to the faithful Baron du Guénic. "Saving your reverence, my lord baron, I never heard the day's wage asked for in the morning."

The company scattered themselves about the rooms, where several persons were already assembled. But the marquis vainly endeavoured to shake off the gloomy ex-

pression which had changed his looks. The chiefs could not fail to perceive the unfavourable impression which the scene had produced on a man whose loyalty was still associated with the fair illusions of youth; and they were ashamed.

Still, a riotous joy broke out in the meeting, composed as it was of the most distinguished persons in the Royalist party, who, in the depths of a revolted province, had never been able to appreciate the events of the Revolution justly, and naturally took the most doubtful hopes for realities. The bold operations which Montauran had undertaken, his name, his fortune, his ability, made all men pluck up their courage, and brought about that most dangerous of all intoxications, the intoxication politic, which can never be cooled but by torrents of blood, almost always shed in vain. To all the company the Revolution was but a passing trouble in the kingdom of France, where, as it seemed to them, no real change had taken place. The country was still the property of the House of Bourbon, and the Royalists were so completely dominant there, that, four years before, Hoche had secured not so much a peace as an armistice. Therefore the nobles made small account of the Revolutionists: in their eyes Bonaparte was a Marceau somewhat luckier than his predecessors. So the ladies were ready to dance very merrily. Only a few of the chiefs, who had actually fought with the Blues, comprehended the gravity of the actual crisis, and as they knew that if they spoke of the First Consul and his power to their benighted comrades they would not be understood, they talked among themselves, looking at the ladies with a carelessness which these latter avenged by private criticisms. Madame du Gua, who seemed to be doing the honours of the ball, tried to amuse the impatience of the lady dancers by addressing to each of them conventional compliments. The screech of the instruments, which were being tuned,

was already audible when she perceived the marquis, his face still bearing some traces of sadness: and she went rapidly up to him:

"I hope you are not disordered by the very ordinary inconvenience which these clowns here have caused you?" she said to him.

But she received no answer: for the marquis, absorbed in reverie, thought he heard certain of the considerations which Marie had prophetically laid before him amidst these very chiefs at the Vivetière, to induce him to throw up the struggle of king against people. But the young man had too lofty a soul, too much pride, perhaps too much sincerity of belief, to abandon the work he had begun, and he made up his mind at this moment to follow it out boldly, in spite of obstacles. He lifted his head proudly, and only then understood what Madame du Gua was saying to him.

"Your thoughts are at Fougères, I suppose!" she said, with a bitterness which showed her sense of the uselessness of the efforts she had made to distract the marquis. "Ah! my lord, I would give my life to put *her* into your hands, and see you happy with her."

"Then why did you take so good a shot at her?"

"Because I should like to see her either dead or in your arms. Yes! I could have loved the Marquis of Montauran while I thought him a hero. Now, I have for him nothing but friendship mingled with sorrow, when I see him cut off from glory by the wandering heart of an opera girl!"

"As far as love goes," said the marquis in a sarcastic tone, "you judge me ill. If I loved the girl, madame, I should feel less desire for her—and if it were not for you, perhaps, I should not think of her at all."

"There she is!" said Madame du Gua, suddenly.

The poor lady was terribly hurt by the haste with which the marquis turned his head: but as the bright light of the

candles enabled her to see the smallest changes in the features of the man so madly loved, she thought she could see some hope of return, when he once more presented his face to her, smiling at her woman's stratagem.

"What are you laughing at?" said the Comte de Bauvan.

"At the bursting of a bubble," answered Madame du Gua joyfully. "Our marquis, if we are to believe him, cannot understand to-day how he felt his heart beat a moment for the baggage[1] who called herself Mlle. de Verneuil—you remember?"

[1] Here is the old difficulty of *fille*. No word used in modern English meets it.—*Translator's Note.*

"Baggage, madame?" repeated the count, in a reproachful tone. "It is the duty of the author of a wrong to redress it, and I give you my word of honour that she is really the Duke de Verneuil's daughter."

"Count," said the marquis, in a voice of deep emotion, "which of your 'words' are we to believe—that given at the Vivetière, or that given at Saint James?"

A loud voice announced Mlle. de Verneuil. The count darted to the door, offered his hand to the beautiful stranger with tokens of the deepest respect, and, ushering her through the inquisitive crowd to the marquis and Madame du Gua, answered the astonished chief, "Believe only the word I give you to-day!"

Madame du Gua grew pale at the sight of this girl, who always presented herself at the wrong moment, and who, for a time, drew herself to her full height, casting haughty glances over the company, among whom she sought the guests of the Vivetière. She waited for the salutation which her rival was forced to give her, and without even looking at the marquis, allowed herself to be conducted to a place of honour by the Count, who seated her near Madame du Gua herself. Mlle. de Verneuil had replied to this lady's greeting by a slight condescending nod, but, with womanly instinct, Madame du Gua showed no vexation, and promptly assumed a smiling and friendly air. Mlle. de Verneuil's singular dress and her great beauty drew for a moment a murmur of admiration from the company, and when the marquis and Madame du Gua turned their eyes to the guests of the Vivetière, they found in them an air of respect which seemed to be sincere, each man appearing to be looking for a way to recover the good graces of the fair Parisian whom he had mistaken. And so the adversaries were fairly met.

"But this is enchantment, mademoiselle," said Madame

du Gua. "Nobody in the world but you could surprise people in this way. What! you have come here all by yourself?"

"All by myself," echoed Mlle. de Verneuil. "And so, madame, this evening you will have nobody but myself to kill."

"Do not be too severe," replied Madame du Gua. "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you again. I was really aghast at the thought of my misconduct towards you, and I was looking for an opportunity which might allow me to set it right."

"As for your misconduct, madame, I pardon you without difficulty that towards myself. But I take to heart the death of the Blues whom you murdered. Perhaps, too, I might complain of the weighty character of your despatches: but there, I forgive everything in consideration of the service you have done me!"

Madame du Gua lost countenance as her fair rival squeezed her hand and smiled on her with insolent grace. The marquis had remained motionless, but now he clutched the count's arm.

"You deceived me disgracefully," said he, "and you have even tarnished my honour. I am not a stage dupe: and I must have your life or you mine."

"Marquis," answered the count haughtily, "I am ready to give you every satisfaction that you can desire."

And they moved towards the next room. Even those guests who had least inkling of the meaning of the scene began to understand the interest of it, so that when the fiddlers struck up the dance not a soul stirred.

"Mademoiselle," asked Madame du Gua, clenching her lips in a kind of fury, "what service have I had the honour of doing you to deserve this gratitude?"

"Did you not enlighten me on the true character of the

Marquis of Montauran, madame? How calmly the odious man let me perish! I give him up to you with the greatest pleasure."

"Then what have you come to seek here?" said Madame du Gua sharply.

"The esteem and the reputation of which you robbed me at the Vivetière, madame. As for anything else, do not disturb yourself. Even if the marquis came back to me, you know that a renewal of love is never love."

Madame du Gua thereupon took Mlle. de Verneuil's hand with the ostentatious endearment of gesture which women, especially in men's company, like to display towards one another.

"Well, dear child, I am delighted to find you so reasonable. If the service I did you seemed rough at first," said she, pressing the hand she held, though she felt a keen desire to tear it as her fingers told her its delicate softness, "it shall be at least a thorough one. Listen to me," she went on with a treacherous smile, "I know the character of the Gars. He would have deceived you. He does not wish to marry, and cannot marry anybody."

"Really?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, he only accepted this dangerous

mission in order to earn the hand of Mlle. d'Uxelles, an alliance in which his majesty has promised him full support."

"What, really?"

And Mlle. de Verneuil added no word to this sarcastic exclamation. The young and handsome Chevalier du Vissard, eager to obtain pardon for the pleasantry which had set the example of insult at the Vivetière, advanced towards her with a respectful invitation to dance: and, extending her hand to him, she rapidly took her place in the quadrille where Madame du Gua also danced. The dress of these ladies, all of whose toilettes recalled the fashions of the exiled court, and who wore powder or frizzled hair, seemed absurd in comparison with the costume at once rich, elegant, and severe, which the actual fashion allowed Mlle. de Verneuil to wear, and which, though condemned aloud, was secretly envied by the other women. As for the men, they were never weary of admiring the beauty of hair left to itself, and the details of a dress whose chief grace consisted in the shape that it displayed.

At this moment the marquis and the count re-entered the ball-room and came up behind Mlle. de Verneuil, who did not turn her head. Even if a mirror, which hung opposite, had not apprised her of the marquis's presence, she could have guessed it from the countenance of Madame du Gua, who hid but ill under an outward air of indifference the impatience with which she expected the contest certain to break out sooner or later between the two lovers. Although Montauran was talking to the count and two other persons, he could nevertheless hear the remarks of the dancers of both sexes, who, according to the change of the figures, were brought from time to time into the place of Mlle. de Verneuil and her neighbours.

"O yes; certainly, madame," said one; "she came by herself."

"She must be very brave," said his partner.

"Why, if I were dressed like that, I should think I had nothing on," said another lady.

"Well, the costume is hardly proper," replied the gentleman; "but she is so pretty, and it suits her so well!"

"Really, I am quite ashamed for her sake to see how perfectly she dances. Don't you think she has exactly the air of an opera girl?" answered the lady, with a touch of jealousy.

"Do you think she has come here as an ambassadress from the First Consul?" asked a third.

"What a joke!" replied the gentleman.

"Her innocence will hardly be her dowry," said the lady, with a laugh.

The Gars turned round sharply to see what woman it was who allowed herself such a gibe, and Madame du Gua looked him in the face, as who would say plainly, "You see what they think of her!"

"Madame," said the count, with another laugh, to Marie's enemy, "it is only ladies who have as yet deprived her of innocence."

The marquis inwardly pardoned Bauvan for all his misdeeds; but when he ventured to cast a glance at his mistress, whose beauties, like those of all women, were enhanced by the candle-light, she turned her back to him as she returned to her place, and began to talk to her partner, so that the marquis could overhear her voice in its most caressing tones.

"The First Consul sends us very dangerous ambassadors," said the chevalier.

"Sir," she replied, "that observation was made before, at the Vivetière."

"But you have as good a memory as the king!" rejoined the gentleman, vexed at his blunder.

"One must needs remember injuries in order to pardon

them," said she briskly, and relieving his embarrassment with a smile.

"Are we all included in this amnesty?" asked the marquis.

But she darted out to dance with the excitement of a child, leaving him unanswered and abashed. He gazed upon her with a melancholy coldness, which she perceived. And then she bent her head in one of the coquettish attitudes in which her exquisitely proportioned neck allowed her to indulge, forgetting no possible movement which could show the rare perfection of her form. Enticing as Hope, she was as fugitive as Memory: and to see her thus was to desire the possession of her at any cost. She knew this well, and her consciousness of beauty shed an inexpressible charm over her face. Montauran felt a whirlwind of love, of rage, of madness, rising in his heart: he pressed the count's hand strongly, and withdrew.

"What! has he gone?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil as she came back to her place.

The count darted to the neighbouring room, and made a knowing gesture to his *protégée* as he brought the Gars back to her.

"He is mine!" she thought, as she perused in the mirror the countenance of Montauran, whose face was slightly agitated, but bright with hope.

She received the young chief at first with glum silence, but she did not leave him again without a smile. His look of distinction was so great, that she felt proud of being able to tyrannize over him, and determined to make him pay dearly for a kind word or two, that he might know their value—thereby obeying an instinct which all women follow in one degree or another. The dance finished, all the gentlemen of the Vivetière party surrounded Marie, each begging pardon for his error with compliments more or less

well turned. But he whom she wished to see at her feet kept aloof from the group of her subjects.

"He thinks I still love him," she thought, "and he will not be lost in the common herd."

She refused the next dance; and then, as though the festival had been given in her honour, she went from quadrille to quadrille leaning on the arm of the Comte de Bauvan, with whom she chose to be in a way familiar. The adventure of the Vivetière was by this time known in its minutest details to the whole company, thanks to the pains taken by Madame du Gua, who hoped, by thus publicly connecting Mlle. de Verneuil and the marquis, to throw another stumbling-block in the way of their reunion. Hence the sundered lovers were the object of general attention. Montauran dared not enter into conversation with his mistress: for the consciousness of his misdoings and the violence of his rekindled desires made her almost terrible to him; while, on her side, the girl kept watching his face of pretended calm, while she seemed to be looking at the dancing.

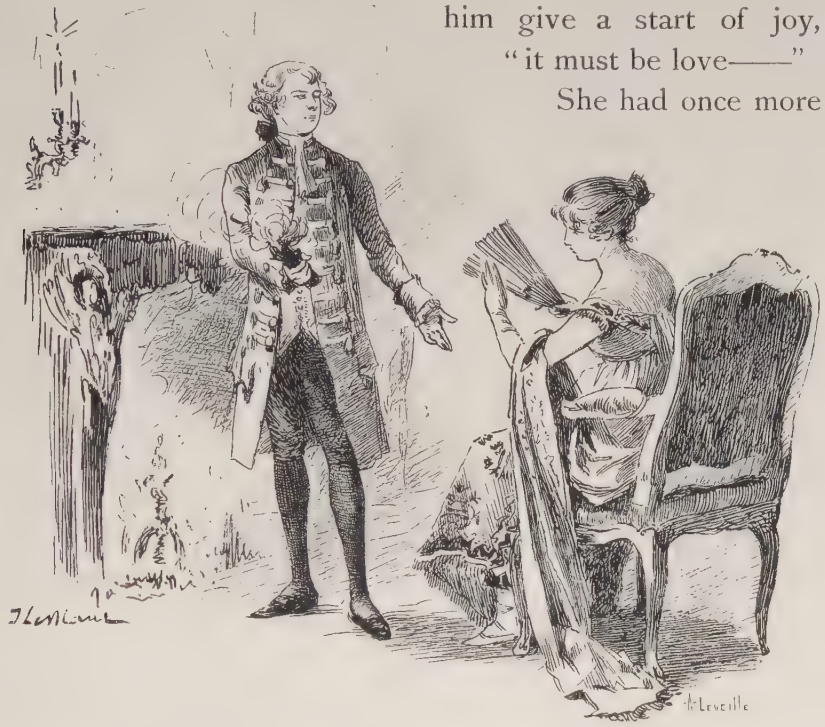
"It is terribly hot here!" she said to her cavalier. "I see M. de Montauran's forehead is quite moist. Take me somewhere else where I can breathe—I feel stifled."

And, with a nod, she indicated to the count a neighbouring apartment, which was occupied only by some card-players. The marquis followed his mistress, whose words he had guessed by the mere motion of her lips. He ventured to hope that she was only withdrawing from the crowd in order to give him an interview, and this supposed favour added a violence as yet unknown to his passion. For every attempt which he had made to conquer his love during the last few days had but increased it. Mlle. de Verneuil took pleasure in tormenting the young chief; and her glance, soft as velvet when it lit upon the count, became

dark and harsh when it chanced to meet the marquis's eyes. Montauran seemed to make a painful effort, and said in a choked voice :

"Will you not then forgive me?"

"Love," she answered coldly, "pardons nothing, or pardons all. But," she went on, seeing him give a start of joy, "it must be love——" She had once more



taken the count's arm, and passed rapidly into a kind of boudoir, serving as antechamber to the card-room. The marquis followed her.

"You shall hear me!" he cried.

"Sir," answered she, "you will make people believe that I came here for your sake, and not out of self-respect. If you do not cease this hateful persecution I must withdraw."

"Well then," said he, remembering one of the maddest actions of the last Duke of Lorraine, "give me leave to speak to you for the time only during which I can hold this

live coal in my hand." He stooped to the hearth, picked up a brand, and grasped it hard. Mlle. de Verneuil's face flushed; she suddenly dropped the arm of the count (who quietly retired, leaving the lovers alone), and stared in wonder at Montauran. So mad an act had touched her heart, for in love there is nothing more effective than a piece of senseless courage.

"All that you prove by this," said she, as she tried to make him throw the brand away, "is that you might give me up to the most cruel tortures. You are always in extremes. On the faith of a fool's word and a woman's slander, you suspected her who had just saved your life of being capable of selling you."

"Yes," said he with a smile, "I was cruel to you. Forget it for ever: I shall never forget it. But listen. I was abominably deceived: but so many circumstances during that fatal day were against you."

"And were these circumstances enough to extinguish your love?"

As he hesitated to answer, she rose with a gesture of scorn.

"Oh! Marie, from this time I will believe none but you!"

"Throw away that fire, I tell you! You are mad! Open your hand: I will have it!"

He chose to oppose some resistance to his mistress's gentle violence, in order to prolong the keen pleasure which he felt in being closely pressed by her tiny caressing fingers. But she at last succeeded in opening the hand, which she would gladly have kissed. A flow of blood had quenched the glowing wood.

"Now, what good did that do you?" she said; and making a bandage of her handkerchief, she applied it to the wound, which was not deep, and which the marquis quickly

covered with his glove. Madame du Gua had come on tiptoe into the card-room, and cast furtive glances at the lovers, whose eyes she adroitly escaped by leaning back at their least movement. But she could not very easily understand their conversation from what she saw of their action.

"If all they told you of me were true, confess that I should be well avenged at this moment," said Marie, with a malicious air which turned the marquis pale.

"But what were the feelings, then, that brought you here?"

"My dear boy, you are a very great coxcomb. Do you really think that you can despise a woman like me with impunity? I came both for your sake and for my own," she went on after a pause, putting her hand to the cluster of rubies which lay in the centre of her breast, and showing him the blade of her dagger.

"What does all this mean?" thought Madame du Gua.

"But," continued Marie, "you still love me—at any rate, you still feel a desire for me, and the folly you have just committed," said she, taking his hand, "has given me proof of it. I have recovered the position I wished to hold, and I can go away satisfied. He who loves is always sure of pardon. For my part, I am loved: I have regained the esteem of the man who is all the world to me: I can die!"

"Then you love me still?" said Montauran.

"Did I say so?" she answered mockingly, and following with joy the progress of the horrible torture which, at her first coming, she had begun to apply to him. "Had I not to make sacrifices in order to get here? I saved M. de Bauvan's life, and he, more grateful than you, has offered me his name and fortune in exchange for my protection. It did not occur to *you* to do that!"

The marquis, aghast at these last words, checked the

most violent access of wrath which he had yet suffered at feeling himself duped by the count, but did not answer.

"Ah! you are considering!" she said, with a bitter smile.

"Mademoiselle," answered the young man, "your doubts justify mine."

"Sir! let us quit this room!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, as she saw the skirt of Madame du Gua's gown. And she rose: but her wish to drive her rival desperate made her linger.

"Do you wish to plunge me into hell?" asked the marquis, taking her hand and pressing it hard.

"Is it not five days since you plunged *me* there? At this very moment are you not leaving me in the cruellest uncertainty whether your love is sincere or not?"

"But how can I tell if you are not pushing your vengeance to the point of making yourself mistress of my life, for the purpose of tarnishing it, instead of planning my death?"

"Ah! you do not love me! You think of yourself, not of me!" said she, furiously, and weeping, for the coquette knew well the power of her eyes when they were drowned in tears.

"Well, then," said he, no longer master of himself, "take my life, but dry your tears!"

"Oh! my love!" cried she in a stifled voice, "these are the words, the tones, the looks that I waited for before setting your happiness above my own. But, sir," she went on, "I must ask you for a last proof of your affection, which you say is so great. I will stay here no longer than is necessary to make it thoroughly known that you are mine. I would not even drink a glass of water in a house where lives a woman who has twice tried to kill me, who is perhaps now plotting some treason against us, and who at this very moment is listening to our talk," said she, guiding the marquis's eyes with her finger to the floating folds of Madame

du Gua's dress. Then she dried her tears, and bent towards the ear of the young chief, who shivered as he felt himself caressed by her sweet moist breath.

"Get ready for our departure," said she. "You shall take me back to Fougères, and there, and there only, you shall know whether I love you or not. For the second time I trust myself to you: will you trust yourself a second time to me?"

"Ah, Marie! you have brought me to such a pass that I know no more what I am doing. Your words, your looks, yourself, have intoxicated me, and I am ready to do anything you wish."

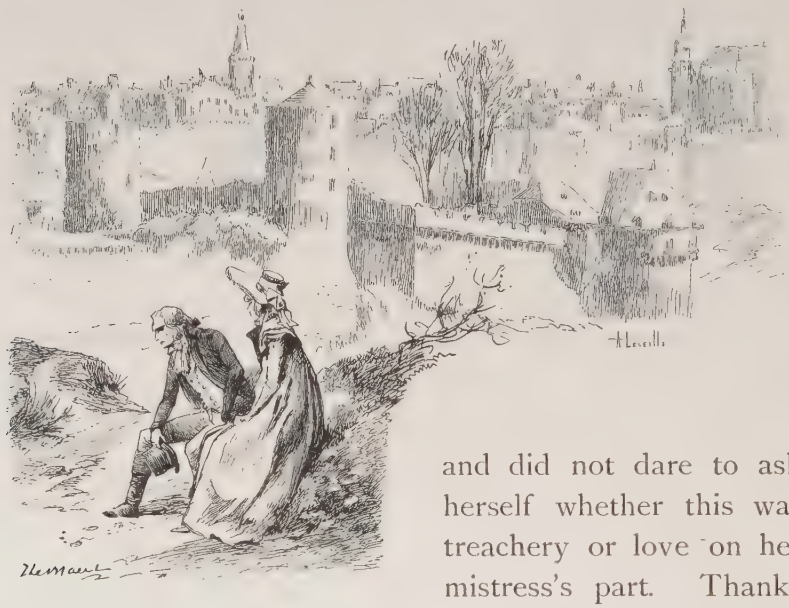
"Well, then! make me for a moment quite happy. Let me enjoy the only triumph I have longed for. I want to breathe freely once, to live the life I have dreamed, and to fill myself full of my dreams, before they vanish. Let us go back: come and dance with me."

They returned together to the ball-room, and although Mlle. de Verneuil had received as complete and hearty a satisfaction of her vanity as ever woman could, the mysterious sweetness of her eyes, the delicate smile on her lips, the brisk movement of a lively dance, kept the secret of her thoughts as the sea keeps those of a murderer who drops into it a heavy corpse. Nevertheless, the company uttered an admiring murmur when she threw herself into the arms of her lover for the waltz, and the two, voluptuously clasping each other, with languishing eyes and drooping heads, whirled round, clasping each other with a kind of frenzy that showed what infinite pleasure they expected from a still closer union.

"Count," said Madame du Gua to M. de Bauvan, "go and find out if Pille-Miche is in camp: bring him to me: and be certain that you shall obtain from me in return for this slight service anything you wish, even my hand. My

vengeance," continued she to herself, as she saw him go off, "will cost me dear: but this time I will not miss it."

A few moments later Mlle. de Verneuil and the marquis were seated in a berline horsed with four stout steeds. Francine, surprised at finding the two supposed enemies with clasped hands and on the best terms, sat speechless,



and did not dare to ask herself whether this was treachery or love on her mistress's part. Thanks to the silence and to the darkness of night, Montauran could not perceive Mlle. de Verneuil's agitation as she drew near Fougères. At length the feeble glimmer of dawn gave a far-off sight of the steeple of Saint Léonard's, and at the same moment Marie said to herself, "Death is near!"

At the first rising ground the same thought occurred to each of the lovers. They alighted from the carriage and climbed the hill on foot, as though in remembrance of their first meeting. When Marie had taken the marquis's arm and walked a short distance, she thanked the young man with a smile for having respected her silence. Then, as

they reached the crown of the hill whence Fougères was visible, she threw aside her reverie altogether.

"You must come no further," she said. "My power would not again avail to save you from the Blues to-day."

Montauran looked at her with some surprise: she gave a sad smile, pointed to a boulder as if bidding him sit down, and herself remained standing in a melancholy posture. The emotions which tore her soul no longer permitted her to practice the artifices of which she had been so prodigal, and for the moment she could have knelt on burning coals without feeling them more than the marquis had felt the lighted wood which he had grasped to attest the violence of his passion. She gazed at her lover with a look full of the profoundest grief before she said to him the appalling words:

"All your suspicions of me are true!"

The marquis gave a sudden movement, but she said, clasping her hands: "For pity's sake, hear me without interruption. I am really and truly," she went on in a faltering tone, "the daughter of the Duke de Verneuil, but his natural daughter only. My mother, who was of the house of Casteran, and who took the veil to escape the sufferings which her family were preparing for her, atoned for her fault by fifteen years of weeping, and died at Séez. Only on her deathbed did the dear abbess address to the man who had abandoned her an entreaty in my favour: for she knew that I had neither friends, prospects, nor fortune. This man, never forgotten under the roof of Francine's mother, to whose care I had been committed, had himself forgotten his child. Nevertheless, the duke received me with pleasure, and acknowledged me because I was beautiful; perhaps, also, because I reminded him of his youth. He was one of those *grands seigneurs* who, in the former reign, prided themselves on showing how a man may procure pardon for a crime by committing it gratefully. I

will say no more: he was my father! But permit me to show you the evil effect which my sojourn at Paris could not help producing on my mind. The society which the Duke de Verneuil kept, and that to which he introduced me, doted on the mocking philosophy which then charmed all France, because it was the rule to make witty profession of it. The brilliant talk which pleased my ear was recommended by its ingenious observations, or by a neatly-turned contempt of religion and of truth generally. As they mocked certain feelings and thoughts, men drew them all the better that they did not share them; and they were as agreeable by dint of their skill in epigram, as by the sprightliness with which they could put a whole story in a phrase. But they too often made the mistake of excessive *esprit*, and wearied women by making love a business rather than an affair of the heart. I made but a weak resistance to this torrent. I had a soul (pardon my vanity!) sufficiently full of passion to feel that *esprit* had withered all hearts: but the life which I then led had the result of bringing about a perpetual conflict between my natural sentiments and the vicious habits I had contracted. Some persons of parts had delighted to foster in me that freedom of thought, that contempt of public opinion, which deprive woman of the modesty of soul that gives her half her charm. Alas! adversity could not eradicate the faults which prosperity had caused. My father," she continued, after heaving a sigh, "the Duke de Verneuil, died after formally acknowledging me, and making in my favour a will which considerably diminished the fortune of my brother, his legitimate son. One morning I found myself without a shelter and without a guardian. My brother contested the will which made me a rich woman. Three years spent in a wealthy household had developed my vanity, and my father, by gratifying my every wish, had created in me a craving for luxury and

habits of indulgence, the tyranny of which my young and simple mind did not comprehend. A friend of my father's, the Marshal-Duke de Lenoncourt, who was seventy years old, offered to be my guardian: I accepted, and a few days after the beginning of the hateful lawsuit, I found myself once more in a splendid establishment, where I enjoyed all the advantages which my brother's cruelty had refused me over my father's coffin. Every evening the marshal spent some hours with me, and the old man spoke all the time nothing but words of gentle consolation. His whole air and the various touching proofs of paternal tenderness which he gave me, seemed to guarantee that his heart held no other sentiments than my own; and I was glad to think myself his daughter. I accepted the jewels he offered me, and hid from him none of the fancies which I found him so glad to satisfy. One evening I learnt that the whole town thought me the poor old man's mistress. It was demonstrated to me that it was out of my power to regain the reputation for innocence of which society causelessly robbed me. The man who had practised on my inexperience could not be my lover and would not be my husband. In the very same week in which I made the hideous discovery—on the very eve of the day fixed for my marriage with him (for I had insisted on bearing his name, the only reparation he could make me)—he fled to Coblentz. I was insultingly driven from the little house in which the marshal had placed me, and which did not belong to him. So far I have told you the truth as if I were in the presence of God himself, but from this point ask not, I pray you, from a wretched girl, an exact account of the miseries buried in her memory. One day, sir, I found myself united to Danton! A few days later the huge oak round which I had cast my arms was uprooted by the storm. When I saw myself once more immersed in poverty

I made up my mind to die. I know not whether I was unconsciously counselled by love of life, by the hope of wearing out my ill-luck and finding at the bottom of this interminable abyss the happiness which fled my grasp, or whether I was won over by the arguments of a young man of Vendôme, who for two years past has fastened himself on me like a serpent on a tree, in the belief no doubt that some extremity of misfortune may induce me to yield to him. In fine, I cannot tell why I accepted the odious mission of making myself beloved by a stranger whom I was to betray for the price of three hundred thousand francs. I saw you, sir, and I recognized you at once by one of those presentiments which never deceive us; yet I amused myself by doubting: for the more I loved you, the more the conviction of my love was terrible to me. Thus, in saving you from the hands of Commandant Hulot, I threw up my part, and resolved to deceive the executioners, and not their victim. I was wrong to play thus with men's lives, with policy, and with my own self, after the fashion of a careless girl who sees nothing in the world but sentiment. I thought I was loved, and in the hope of a new beginning of life I let myself drift. But all things, myself perhaps included, betrayed my past excesses; for you must have had your suspicions of a woman so full of passion as I am. Alas! can anyone refuse pardon to my love, and my dissembling? Yes, sir! it seemed to me that I was awaking from a long and painful sleep, and that at my waking I found myself once more sixteen. Was I not in Alençon, which was connected with the chaste and pure memories of my youth? I was simple enough, I was mad enough, to believe that love would give me a baptism of innocence. For a moment I thought myself still a maid because I had never yet loved. But yesterday evening your passion seemed to me a real passion, and a voice asked me, 'Why deceive him?' Know then, lord

marquis," she continued in a deep tone, which seemed proudly to challenge reprobation, "know it well that I am but a creature without honour, unworthy of you. From this moment I take up my part of wanton once more, weary of playing that of a woman to whom you had restored all the chastities of the heart. Virtue is too heavy a load for me; and I should despise you if you were weak enough to wed me. A Count de Bauvan might commit a folly of that kind, but you, sir, be worthy of your own future, and leave me without a regret. The courtesan in me, look you, would be too exacting; she would love you in another fashion from that of the simple innocent girl who felt in her heart, for one instant, the exquisite hope of some day being your companion, of making you ever happy, of doing you honour, of becoming a noble and worthy wife to you; and who, from this sentiment, has drawn the courage to revive her evil nature of vice and infamy, in order to set an eternal barrier between you and herself. To you I sacrifice honour and fortune: my pride in this sacrifice will support me in my misery, and fate may do with me as it will. I will never give you up to them. I shall return to Paris, where your name shall be to me as another self, and the splendid distinction which you will give it will console me for all my woes. As for you, you are a man; you will forget me—— Farewell!"

She darted away in the direction of the valleys of Saint Sulpice, and disappeared before the marquis could rise to stop her. But she doubled back on her steps, availed herself of a hollow rock as a hiding-place, raised her head, scrutinized Montauran with a curiosity which was mingled with doubt, and saw him walking he knew not whither, like a man overwhelmed.

"Is he then but a weakling?" she said, when he was lost to sight, and she felt that they were parted. "Will he understand me?"

She shuddered: then she bent her steps suddenly and rapidly towards Fougères, at if she feared that the marquis would follow to the town, where death awaited him.

"Well, Francine, what did he say to you?" she asked her faithful Breton maid when they met again.

"Alas! Marie, I pity him! You great ladies make your tongues daggers to stab men with."

"What did he look like, then, when he met you?"

"Do you think he even saw me? Oh, Marie, he loves you!"

"Ah yes," answered she, "he loves me, or he loves me not,—two words which mean heaven or hell to me. Between the extremes I see no middle space on which I can set my foot."

Having thus worked out her terrible fate, Marie could give herself up entirely to sorrow; and the countenance which she had kept up hitherto by a mixture of diverse sentiments experienced so rapid a change that, after a day in which she hovered unceasingly between presages of happiness and forebodings of despair, she lost the fresh and radiant beauty whose first cause lies either in the absence of all passion or in the intoxication of happiness.

Curious to know the result of her wild enterprise, Hulot

and Corentin had called upon Marie shortly after her arrival. She received them with a smiling air.

"Well," said she to the commandant, whose anxious face expressed considerable inquisitiveness, "the fox has come back within range of your guns, and you will soon gain a glorious victory!"

"What has happened then?" asked Corentin, carelessly, but casting on Mlle. de Verneuil one of the sidelong glances by which diplomatists of this stamp spy out others' thoughts.

"Why," she answered, "the Gars is more in love with me than ever, and I made him come with us up to the very gates of Fougères."

"It would appear that your power ceased there," retorted Corentin, "and that the *ci-devant's* fear is stronger than the love with which you inspired him."

Mlle. de Verneuil threw a scornful look at Corentin.

"You judge him by yourself," answered she.

"Well," said he, without showing any emotion, "why did you not bring him straight to us?"

"If he really loves me, commandant," said she to Hulot with a malicious look, "would you never forgive me if I saved him by taking him away from France?"

The old soldier stepped briskly up to her, and seized her hand to kiss it, with a kind of enthusiasm. But then he looked steadily at her and said, his face darkening:

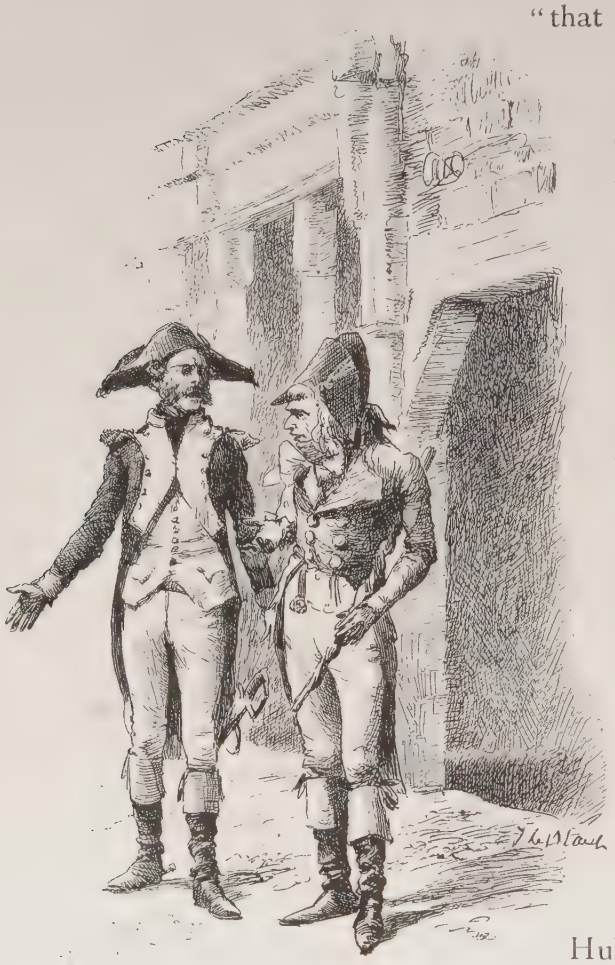
"You forget my two friends and my sixty-three men!"

"Ah! commandant," she said, with all the *naïveté* of passion, "that was not his fault. He was duped by a wicked woman, Charette's mistress, who I believe would drink the blood of the Blues."

"Come, Marie," said Corentin, "do not play tricks with the commandant; he does not understand your pleasantries yet."

"Be silent," she answered, "and know that the day when you become a little too repulsive to me will be your last."

"I see, mademoiselle," said Hulot without bitterness, "that I must make ready for battle."



"You are not in case to give it, my dear colonel. At Saint James I saw that they had more than six thousand men, with regular troops, artillery, and English officers. But what would become of all these folk without *him?* I hold with Fouché, that his head is everything."

"Well, shall we have his head?" asked Corentin, out of patience.

"I don't know," said she carelessly.

"English!" cried Hulot angrily; "that was the only thing wanting to make him out and out a brigand! Ah, I'll English you, I will!" But he added to Corentin, when they were a little distance from the house, "It would appear, citizen diplomatist, that you let yourself be routed at regular intervals by that girl."

"It is very natural, citizen commandant," answered Co-

rentin thoughtfully, "that you should not have known what to make of all she said to us. You military gentlemen do not perceive that there are more ways of making war than one. To make cunning use of the passions of men and women, as though they were springs worked upon for the benefit of the state, to adjust all the wheels in the mighty machine which we call a government, to take delight in shutting up in it the most refractory sentiments like catch-springs, to be watched over for amusement,—is not this to be an actual creator, and to put oneself like God at the centre of the universe?"

"You will be good enough to let me prefer my trade to yours," replied the soldier drily. "You may do what you like with your machinery, but I acknowledge no other superior than the Minister of War. I have my orders: I shall begin my operations with fellows who will not sulk or shirk, and I shall meet in front the foe whom you want to steal on from behind."

"Oh, you can get into marching order if you like," answered Corentin. "From what the girl lets me guess, enigmatic as she seems to you, you will have some skirmishing, and I shall procure you before long the pleasure of a *tête-à-tête* with the brigand chief."

"How so?" said Hulot, stepping back to get a better view of this strange personage.

"Mlle. de Verneuil loves the Gars," said Corentin, in a stifled voice, "and perhaps he loves her. A marquis, with the red ribbon, young, able, perhaps even (for who knows) still rich—there are sufficient temptations for you. She would be a fool not to fight for her own hand, and try to marry him rather than give him up. She is trying to throw dust in our eyes; but I read in her own some irresolution. In all probability the two lovers will have an assignation, perhaps it is already arranged. Well then, to-morrow I shall

have my man fast! Hitherto he has only been the Republic's enemy; a few minutes since he became mine. Now, every man who has taken a fancy to get between me and that girl has died on the scaffold."

When he had finished Corentin fell back into a study, which prevented him from seeing the intense disgust depicted on the countenance of the generous soldier, as he fathomed the depth of the intrigue and the working of the engines employed by Fouché. And so Hulot made up his mind to thwart Corentin in every point not absolutely hurtful to the success and the objects of the government, and to give the Republic's foe the chance of dying with honour and sword in hand before becoming the prey of the executioner, whose jackal this agent of the superior police avowed himself to be.

"If the First Consul would listen to me," said he to himself, turning his back on Corentin, "he would let these foxes and the aristocrats, who are worthy of each other, fight it out between them, and employ soldiers on very different business."

Corentin on his side looked coolly at the soldier (whose face had now betrayed his thoughts), and his eyes recovered the sardonic expression which showed the superior intelligence of this subaltern Machiavel.

"Give three yards of blue cloth to brutes of this kind," thought he, "stick a piece of iron by their sides, and they will fancy that in politics there is only one proper way of killing a man." He paced up and down slowly for a few moments: then he said to himself suddenly: "Yes! the hour is come. The woman shall be mine! For five years the circle I have drawn round her has narrowed, little by little. I have her now, and with her help I will climb as high in the government as Fouché. Yes! let her lose the one man she has loved, and grief will give her to me body and

soul. It only remains to watch night and day in order to discover her secret."

A minute later an observer might have descried Corentin's pale face across the window panes of a house whence he could inspect every living thing that entered the cul-de-sac formed by the row of houses running parallel to Saint Léonard's Church. With the patience of a cat watching a mouse, Corentin was still, on the morning of the next day, giving heed to the least noise, and severely scrutinizing every passer-by. The day then beginning was a market day. Although in these unfortunate times the peasants were with difficulty induced to risk themselves in the town, Corentin saw a man of a gloomy countenance, dressed in a goatskin, and carrying on his arm a small round flat basket, who was making his way towards Mlle. de Verneuil's house, after casting round him glances indifferent enough. Corentin went downstairs, intending to wait for the peasant when he came out; but suddenly it occurred to him that if he could make a sudden appearance at Mlle. de Verneuil's he might

perhaps surprise at a single glance the secrets hid in the messenger's basket. Besides, common fame had taught him that it was almost impossible to get the better of the impenetrable answers of Bretons and Normans.

"Galope-Chopine!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, when Francine ushered in the Chouan. "Can it be that I am loved?" she added in a whisper to herself.

An instinct of hope shed the brightest hues over her complexion, and diffused joy throughout her heart. Galope-Chopine looked from the mistress of the house to Francine, his glances at the latter being full of mistrust; but a gesture from Mlle. de Verneuil reassured him.

"Madame," said he, "towards the stroke of two he will be at my house, and will wait for you there."

Her emotions allowed Mlle. de Verneuil to make no other reply than an inclination of the head, but a Samoyede could have understood the full meaning of this. At the very same moment the steps of Corentin echoed in the saloon. Galope-Chopine did not disturb himself in the least when Mlle. de Verneuil's start and her looks at once showed him a danger-signal: and as soon as the spy exhibited his cunning face, the Chouan raised his voice ear-piercingly:

"Oh, yes!" said he to Francine, "there is Breton butter and Breton butter. You want Gibarry butter, and you will only give eleven sous the pound. You ought not to have sent for me. That is good butter, that is!" said he, opening his basket and showing two little pats of butter of Barbette's making. "You must pay a fair price, good lady. Come, let us say another sou!"

His hollow voice showed not the least anxiety, and his green eyes, shaded by thick grizzly eyebrows, bore without flinching Corentin's piercing gaze.

"Come, good fellow, hold your tongue. You did not come here to sell butter; for you are dealing with a lady

who never cheapened anything in her life. Your business, old boy, is one which will make you a head shorter some day!" And Corentin, with a friendly clap on the shoulder, added, "You can't go on long serving both Chouans and Blues."

Galope-Chopine had need of all his presence of mind to gulp down his wrath without denying this charge, which, owing to his avarice, was a true one. He contented himself with replying :

"The gentleman is pleased to be merry——"

Corentin had turned his back on the Chouan, but in the act of saluting Mlle. de Verneuil, whose heart was in her mouth, he was easily able to keep an eye on him in the mirror. Galope-Chopine, who thought himself out of the spy's sight, questioned Francine with a look, and Francine pointed to the door, saying : "Come with me, good man, we shall come to terms, no doubt."

Nothing had escaped Corentin, neither the tightened lips which Mlle. de Verneuil's smile hid but ill, nor her blush, nor her altered expression, nor the Chouan's anxiety, nor Francine's gesture. He had seen it all ; and, convinced that Galope-Chopine was an emissary of the marquis, he stopped him as he was going out by catching hold of the long hair of his goatskin, brought him in front of himself, and looked straight at him, saying :

"Where do you live, good friend ? *I* want some butter."

"Good gentleman," answered the Chouan, "all Fougères knows where I live. I am, as you may say——"

"Corentin!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, interrupting Galope-Chopine's answer, "you are very forward to pay me visits at this hour, and to catch me like this, scarcely dressed. Let the peasant alone. He does not understand your tricks any more than I understand their object. Go, good fellow."

Galope-Chopine hesitated for a moment before going. His irresolution, whether it were real or feigned, as of a poor wretch who did not know which of the two to obey, had already begun to impose on Corentin, when the Chouan, at a commanding signal from the young lady, departed with heavy steps. Mlle. de Verneuil and Corentin gazed at each other in silence : and this time Marie's clear eyes could not

endure the blaze of dry light which poured from the man's looks. The air of resolve with which the spy had entered the room, an expression on his face which was strange to Marie, the dull sound of his squeaky voice, his attitude,—all alarmed her : she understood that a secret struggle was beginning between them, and that he was straining all the power of his sinister influence against her. But if at the moment she caught a full and distinct view of the abyss towards which she was hastening, she drew from her love strength to shake off the icy chill of her presentiments.

"Corentin!" she said, merrily enough, "I hope you will be good enough to allow me to finish my toilette."

"Marie," said he—"yes, give me leave to call you so—you do not know me yet. Listen! a less sharp-sighted man than myself would have already discovered your affection for the Marquis of Montauran. I have again and again offered you my heart and my hand. You did not think me worthy of you, and perhaps you were right. But if you think your station too lofty, your beauty or your mind too great for me, I can find means to draw you down to my level. My ambition and my precepts have not inspired you with much esteem for me: and here, to speak frankly, you are wrong. Men as a rule are not worth even my estimate of them, which is next to nothing. I shall attain of a certainty to a high position, the honours of which will please you. Who can love you better, who can make you more completely mistress of himself than the man who has already loved you for five years? Although I run the risk of seeing you conceive an unfavourable idea of me (for you do not believe it possible to renounce the person one adores through mere excess of love), I will give you the measure of the disinterestedness of my affection for you. Do not shake your pretty head in that way. If the marquis loves you, marry him: but make yourself quite sure first of his sincerity. I should be in despair if I knew you had been deceived: for I prefer your happiness to my own. My resolution may surprise you; but pray attribute it to nothing but the common sense of a man who is not fool enough to wish to possess a woman against her will. And so it is myself and not you whom I hold guilty of the uselessness of my efforts. I hoped to gain you by force of submission and devotion, for, as you know, I have long sought to make you happy after my own fashion, but you have never chosen to reward me in any way."

"I have endured your company," she said haughtily.

"Add that you are sorry for having done so."

"After the disgraceful plot in which you have entangled me, must I still thank you?"

"When I suggested to you an enterprise which was not blameless in the eyes of timid souls," answered he boldly, "I had nothing but your good fortune in view. For my own part, whether I win or fail, I shall find means of making either result useful to the success of my designs. If you married Montauran, I should be charmed to do yeoman's service to the Bourbon cause at Paris, where I belong to the Clichy Club. Any incident which put me in communication with the princes would decide me to abandon the interests of a Republic which is rapidly hastening to its decline and fall. General Bonaparte is too clever not to feel that he cannot be in Germany, in Italy, and here, where the Revolution is succumbing, all at once. It is pretty clear that he brought about the 18th Brumaire only to stand on better terms with the Bourbons in treating with them concerning France, for he is a fellow with his wits about him, and with foresight enough. But men of policy must anticipate him on his own road. A scruple about betraying France is but one more of those which we men of parts leave to fools. I will not hide from you that I have all necessary powers for treating with the Chouan chiefs as well as for arranging their ruin. My patron, Fouché, is deep enough, and has always played a double game. During the Terror he was at once for Robespierre and for Danton——"

"Whom you basely deserted," said she.

"Nonsense!" answered Corentin. "He is dead: think not of him. Come! speak to me frankly, since I have set you the example. This demi-brigadier is sharper than he looks, and if you wish to outwit his vigilance I might be of some service to you. Remember that he has filled the valleys with Counter-Chouans, and would quickly get wind of your rendezvous. If you stay here under his eyes you

are at the mercy of his police. Only see how quickly he found out that this Chouan was in your house! Must not his sagacity as a soldier show him that your least movements will be a tell-tale to him of those of the marquis, if the marquis loves you?"

Mlle. de Verneuil had never heard a voice so gently affectionate. Corentin seemed to speak in entire good faith and full trust. The poor girl's heart was so susceptible to generous impressions that she was on the point of yielding her secret to the serpent who was winding his coils round her. But she bethought her that there was no proof of the sincerity of this artful language, and so she had no scruple in duping him who was acting the spy on her.

"Well, Corentin," said she, "you have guessed aright. Yes, I love the marquis, but he loves not me. At least, I fear it, for the rendezvous which he has given me seems to hide some trap."

"But," said Corentin, "you told us yesterday that he had accompanied you to Fougères. Had he wished to use violence towards you you would not be here."

"Corentin, your heart is seared. You can calculate scientifically on the course of human life in general, and yet not on those of a single passion. Perhaps this is the reason of the constant repulsion I feel for you. But since you are so perspicacious, try to guess why a man from whom I parted roughly the day before yesterday is impatiently expecting me to-day on the Mayenne road, in a house at Florigny, towards evening."

At this confession, which seemed to have escaped her in a moment of excitement natural enough to a creature so frank and so passionate, Corentin flushed; for he was still young. He cast sideways on her one of those piercing glances which quest for the soul. Mlle. de Verneuil's

naïveté was so well feigned that she deceived the spy, and he answered with artificial good-nature:

"Would you like me to accompany you at a distance? I would take some disguised soldiers with me, and we should be at your orders."

"Agreed," she said; "but promise me on your honour—ah, no! I do not believe in that; on your salvation—but you do not believe in God; on your soul—but, perhaps, you have none. What guarantee of fidelity can you give me? Still, I will trust you, and I put in your hands what is more than my life—either my vengeance or my love!"

The faint smile which appeared on Corentin's pale countenance acquainted Mlle. de Verneuil with the danger she had just avoided. The agent, his nostrils contracting instead of dilating, took his victim's hand, kissed it with marks of the deepest respect, and left her with a bow, which was not devoid of elegance. Three hours after this interview Mlle. de Verneuil, who feared Corentin's return, slipped furtively out of the gate of Saint Léonard, and gained the little path of the Nid-aux-Crocs, leading to the Nançon valley. She thought herself safe as she passed unnoticed through the labyrinth of tracks leading to Galope-Chopine's cabin, whither she advanced gaily, led by the hope of at last finding happiness, and by the desire of extricating her lover from his threatened fate. Meanwhile Corentin was engaged in hunting for the commandant. It was with difficulty that he recognized Hulot, when he found him in a small open space, where he was busy with some military preparations. The brave veteran had indeed made a sacrifice, the merit of which can hardly be put sufficiently high. His pigtail and his moustaches were shaved, and his hair, arranged like a priest's, had a dash of powder. Shod with great hobnailed shoes, his old blue uniform and his sword exchanged for a goatskin, a belt garnished with pistols, and a heavy rifle,

he was inspecting two hundred men of Fougères, whose dress might have deceived the eyes of the most experienced Chouan. The warlike spirit of the little town and the Breton character were both exhibited in this scene, which was not the first of its kind. Here and there mothers and sisters were bringing to their sons and brothers brandy-flasks or pistols which had been forgotten. More than one old man was examining the number and goodness of the cartridges carried by these National Guards, who were disguised as Counter-Chouans, and whose cheerfulness seemed rather to indicate a hunting-party than a dangerous expedition. For them, the skirmishes of the Chouan war, where the Bretons of the towns fought with the Bretons of the country, seemed to have taken the place of the tourneys of chivalry. This patriotic enthusiasm perhaps owed its origin to the acquisition of some of the confiscated property; but much of its ardour was also due to the better appreciation of the benefits of the Revolution which existed in the towns, to party fidelity, and to a certain love of war, characteristic of the race. Hulot was struck with admiration as he went through the ranks asking information from Gudin, on whom he had bestowed all the friendly feeling which had formerly been allotted to Merle and Gérard. A considerable number of the townsmen were spectators of the preparations for the expedition, and were able to compare the bearing of their noisy comrades with that of a battalion of Hulot's demi-brigade. The Blues, motionless, in faultless line and silent, waited for the orders of the commandant, whom the eyes of each soldier followed as he went from group to group. When he came up to the old officer, Corentin could not help smiling at the change in Hulot's appearance. He looked like a portrait which has lost its resemblance to the original.

"What is up?" asked Corentin of him.

"Come and fire a shot with us, and you will know," answered the commandant.

"Oh! I am not a Fougères man," replied Corentin.

"We can all see that, citizen," said Gudin; and some mocking laughter came from the neighbouring groups.

"Do you think," retorted Corentin, "that there is no way of saving France but with bayonets?" and he turned his back on the laughers, and addressed himself to a woman in order to learn the purpose and destination of this expedition.

"Alas! good sir, the Chouans are already at Florigny. 'Tis said that there are more than three thousand of them, and that they are coming to take Fougères."

"Florigny!" cried Corentin, growing pale; "then that cannot be the meeting-place! Do you mean," he went on, "Florigny on the Mayenne road?"

"There are not two Florignys," answered the woman, pointing to the road which ended at the top of the Pilgrim.

"Are you going after the Marquis of Montauran?" asked Corentin of the commandant.

"Rather," answered Hulot roughly.

"He is not at Florigny," replied Corentin. "Send your battalion and the National Guards thither, but keep some of your Counter-Chouans with yourself, and wait for me."

"He is too sly to be mad," cried the commandant, as he saw Corentin stride hastily off. "'Tis certainly the king of spies."

At the same time he gave his battalion the order to march, and the Republican soldiers went silently, and without beat of drum, through the narrow suburb which leads to the Mayenne road, marking against the houses and the trees a long line of blue and red. The disguised National Guards followed them, but Hulot remained in the little square with Gudin and a score of picked young townsmen

waiting for Corentin, whose air of mystery had excited his curiosity. Francine herself told the wary spy of the departure of Mlle. de Verneuil; all his suspicions at once became certainties, and he went forth to gain new light on this deservedly questionable absence. Learning from the guard at the Porte Saint Léonard that the fair stranger had passed by the Nid-aux-Crocs, Corentin ran to the Walks, and, as ill-luck would have it, reached them just in time to perceive all Marie's movements. Although she had put on a gown and hood of green in order to be less conspicuous, the quick motion of her almost frenzied steps showed clearly enough, through the leafless and hoar-frosted hedges, the direction of her journey.

"Ah!" cried he, "you ought to be making for Florigny, and you are going down towards the valley of Gibarry! I am but a simpleton: she has duped me. But patience! I can light my lamp by day as well as by night." And then, having pretty nearly guessed the place of the lovers' assignation, he ran to the square at the very moment when Hulot was about to quit it and follow up his troops.

"Halt, general!" he cried to the commandant, who turned back.

In a moment Corentin had acquainted the soldier with incidents, the connecting web of which, though hid, had allowed some of its threads to appear: and Hulot, struck by the agent's shrewdness, clutched his arm briskly.

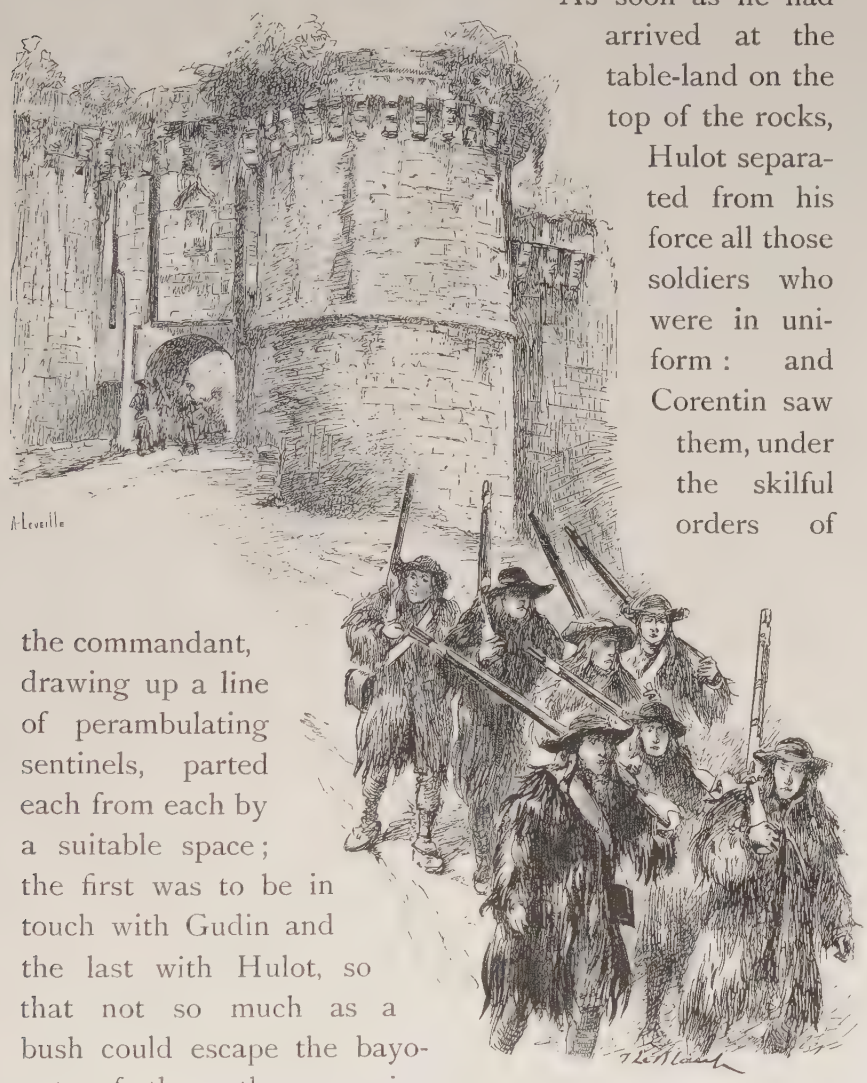
"A thousand thunders! Citizen Inquisitive, you are right! The brigands are making a feint down there! The two flying columns that I sent to beat the neighbourhood between the Antrain and the Vitré roads have not come back yet, and so we shall find in the country reinforcements which will be useful, for the Gars is not fool enough to risk himself without his cursed screech-owls at hand. Gudin!" said he to the young Fougères man, "run and tell Captain Lebrun

that he can do without me in drubbing the brigands at Florigny, and then come back in no time. You know the by-paths: I shall wait for you to hunt up the *ci-devant* and avenge the murders at the Vivetière. God's thunder! How he runs!" added he, looking at Gudin, who vanished as if by magic. "Would not Gérard have loved the boy!"

When he came back, Gudin found Hulot's little force increased by some soldiers drawn from the various guard-houses of the town. The commandant bade the young man pick out a dozen of his fellow-townsmen who had most experience in the difficult business of counterfeiting the Chouans, and ordered him to make his way by Saint Léonard's Gate, so as to take the route to the rear of the heights of Saint Sulpice facing the great valley of the Couësnon, where was the cottage of Galope-Chopine. Then he put himself at the head of the rest of the force, and left by the Porte Saint Sulpice, meaning to gain the crest of the hills where he, according to his plans, expected to meet Beau-Pied and his men. With these he intended to strengthen a cordon of sentries whose business was to watch the rocks from the Faubourg Saint Sulpice to the Nid-aux-Crocs. Corentin, confident that he had placed the fate of the Chouan chief in the hands of his most implacable enemies, went rapidly to the Promenade in order to get a better view of Hulot's dispositions as a whole. It was not long before he saw Gudin's little party debouching by the Nançon dale, and following the rocks along the side of the great Couësnon Valley: while Hulot, slipping out[1] along the Castle of Fougères, climbed the dangerous path which led to the crest of the Saint Sulpice crags. In this manner the two parties were working on parallel lines. The trees and bushes, richly arabesqued by the hoar-frost,

[1] The word used, *débusquant*, is the technical sporting term for a wolf leaving its lair. —*Translator's Note.*

threw over the country a white gleam against which it was easy to see the two detachments moving like grey lines.



As soon as he had arrived at the table-land on the top of the rocks, Hulot separated from his force all those soldiers who were in uniform: and Corentin saw them, under the skilful orders of the commandant, drawing up a line of perambulating sentinels, parted each from each by a suitable space; the first was to be in touch with Gudin and the last with Hulot, so that not so much as a bush could escape the bayonets of these three moving lines who were about to track down the Gars across the hills and fields.

"He is cunning, the old watch-dog!" cried Corentin, as he lost sight of the last flashes of the gun-barrels amid the

ajoncs. "The Gars's goose is cooked! If Marie had betrayed this d——d marquis, she and I should have been united by the firmest of all ties, that of disgrace. But all the same, she shall be mine!"

The twelve young men of Fougères, led by Sub-lieutenant Gudin, soon gained the slope where the Saint Sulpice crags sink down in smaller hills to the Valley of Gibarry. Gudin, for his part, left the roads, and jumped lightly over the bar of the first broom-field he came to, being followed by six of his fellows; the others, by his orders, made their way into the fields towards the right, so as to beat the ground on each side of the road. Gudin darted briskly towards an apple-tree which stood in the midst of the broom. At the rustle made by the march of the six counter-Chouans, whom he led across this broom forest, trying not to disturb its frosted tufts, seven or eight men, at whose head was Beau-Pied, hid themselves behind some chestnut trees which crowned the hedge of the field. Despite the white gleam which lighted up the country, and despite their own sharp eyesight, the Fougères party did not at first perceive the others, who had sheltered themselves behind the trees.

"Hist! Here they are!" said Beau-Pied, the first to raise his head, "the brigands have got in front of us: but as we have got them at the end of our guns, don't let us miss them, or, by Jove! we shan't deserve to be even the Pope's soldiers!"

However, Gudin's piercing eyes had at last noticed certain gun-barrels levelled at his little party. At the same moment, with a bitter mockery, eight deep voices cried "*Qui vive?*" and eight gunshots followed. The balls whistled round the counter-Chouans, of whom one received a wound in the arm, and another fell. The five men of Fougères, who remained unhurt, answered with a volley, shouting, "Friends!" Then they rushed upon their supposed enemies so as to close with them before they could reload.

"We did not know we spoke so much truth!" cried the young sub-lieutenant, as he recognized the uniform and the battered hats of his own demi-brigade. "We have done like true Bretons—fought first, and asked questions afterwards."

The eight soldiers stood astounded as they recognized Gudin. "Confound it, sir! Who the devil would not have taken you for brigands with your goatskins?" cried Beau-Pied mournfully.

"It is a piece of ill luck, and nobody is to blame, since you had no notice that our counter-Chouans were going to make a sally. But what have you been doing?"

"We are hunting a dozen Chouans, sir, who are amusing themselves by breaking our backs. We have been running like poisoned rats: and what with jumping over these bars and hedges (may thunder confound them!) our legs are worn out, and we were taking a rest. I think the brigands must be now somewhere about the hut where you see the smoke rising."

"Good!" cried Gudin. "Fall back," added he to Beau-Pied and his eight men, "across the fields to the Saint Sulpice rocks, and support the line of sentries that the commandant has posted there. You must not stay with us because you are in uniform. Odds cartridges! We are trying to get hold of the dogs, for the Gars is among them. Your comrades will tell you more than I can. File to the right, and don't pull trigger on six others of our goatskins that you may meet! You will know our counter-Chouans by their neckerchiefs, which are coiled round without a knot."

Gudin deposited his two wounded men under the apple-tree, and continued his way to Galope-Chopine's house, which Beau-Pied had just pointed out to him, and the smoke of which served as a landmark. While the young

officer had thus got on the track of the Chouans by a collision common enough in this war, but which might have had more fatal results, the little detachment which Hulot himself commanded had reached on its own line of operations a point parallel to that at which Gudin had arrived on his. The old soldier at the head of his counter-Chouans slipped silently among the hedges with all the eagerness of a young man, and jumped the bars with sufficient agility, directing his restless eyes to all the points that commanded them, and pricking up his ears like a hunter at the least noise.

In the third field which he entered he perceived a woman, some thirty years old, busy in hoeing the soil, and working hard in a stooping posture; while a little boy, about seven or eight years old, armed with a bill-hook, was shaking rime off some *ajoncs* which had sprung up here and there, cutting them down, and piling them in heaps. At the noise which Hulot made in alighting heavily across the bar, the little gars and his mother raised their heads. Hulot naturally enough mistook the woman, young as she was, for a crone. Premature wrinkles furrowed her forehead and neck, and she was so oddly clothed in a worn goatskin, that had it not been that her sex was indicated by a dirty yellow linen gown Hulot would not have known whether she was man or woman, for her long black tresses were hidden under a red woollen nightcap. The rags in which the small boy was clothed, after a fashion, showed his skin through them.

"Hullo, old woman!" said Hulot in a lowered voice to her as he drew near, "where is the Gars?" At the same moment the score of counter-Chouans who followed him crossed the boundary of the field.

"Oh! to get to the Gars you must go back the way you came," answered the woman, after casting a distrustful glance on the party.

"Did I ask you the way to the suburb of the Gars at Fougères, old bag of bones?" replied Hulot roughly. "Saint Anne of Auray! Have you seen the Gars pass?"

"I do not know what you mean," said the woman, bending down to continue her work.

"D——d *garce* that you are! Do you want the Blues, who are after us, to gobble us up?" cried Hulot.

At these words the woman lifted herself up and cast another

suspicious look at the counter-Chouans as she answered, "How can the Blues be after you? I saw seven or eight of them just now going back to Fougères by the road down there."

"Would not a man say that she looks like biting us?" said Hulot. "Look there, old Nanny!"

And the commandant pointed out to her, some fifty paces behind, three or four of his sentinels, whose uniforms and guns were unmistakable.

"Do you want to have our throats cut, when Marche-à-Terre has sent us to help the Gars, whom the men of Fougères are trying to catch?" he went on angrily.

"Your pardon," answered the woman, "but one is so easily deceived! What parish do you come from?" asked she.

"From Saint George!" cried two or three of the men of Fougères in Low Breton, "and we are dying of hunger!"

"Well, then, look here," said the woman, "do you see that smoke there? that is my house. If you take the paths on the right and keep up, you will get there. Perhaps you will meet my husband by the way—Galope-Chopine has got to stand sentinel to warn the Gars: for you know he is coming to our house to-day," added she, with pride.

"Thanks, good woman," answered Hulot. "Forward, men! By God's thunder!" added he, speaking to his followers, "we have got him!"

At these words the detachment, breaking into a run, followed the commandant, who plunged into the path pointed out to him. When she heard the self-styled Chouan's by no means Catholic imprecation, Galope-Chopine's wife turned pale. She looked at the gaiters and goat-skins of the Fougères youth, sat down on the ground, clasped her child in her arms, and said:

"The Holy Virgin of Auray and the blessed Saint Labre have mercy upon us! I do not believe that they are our

folk: their shoes have no nails! Run by the lower road to warn your father: his head is at stake!" she said to the little boy, who disappeared like a fawn through the broom and the *ajoncs*.

Mlle. de Verneuil, however, had not met on her way any of the parties of Blues or Chouans who were hunting each other in the maze of fields that lay round Galope-Chopine's cottage. When she saw a bluish column rising from the half-shattered chimney of the wretched dwelling, her heart underwent one of those violent palpitations, the quick and sounding throbs of which seem to surge up to the throat. She stopped, leant her hand against a tree-branch, and stared at the smoke which was to be a beacon at once to the friends and enemies of the young chief. Never had she felt such overpowering emotion.

"Oh!" she said to herself with a sort of despair, "I love him too much! It may be I shall lose command of myself to-day!"

Suddenly she crossed the space which separated her from the cottage, and found herself in the yard, the mud of which had been hardened by the frost. The great dog once more flew at her, barking; but at a single word pronounced by Galope-Chopine he held his tongue and wagged his tail. As she entered the cabin Mlle. de Verneuil threw into it an all-embracing glance. The marquis was not there: and Marie breathed more freely. She observed with pleasure that the Chouan had exerted himself to restore some cleanliness to the dirty single chamber of his lair. Galope-Chopine grasped his duck-gun, bowed silently to his guest, and went out with his dog. She followed him to the door-step, and saw him departing by the path which went to the right of his hut, and the entrance of which was guarded by a large rotten tree, which served as an *échalier*, though one almost in ruins. Thence she could perceive a range of

fields, the bars of which showed like a vista of gates, for the trees and hedges, stripped bare, allowed full view of the least details of the landscape. When Galope-Chopine's broad hat had suddenly disappeared, Mlle. de Verneuil turned to the left to look for the church of Fougères, but the outhouse hid it from her wholly. Then she cast her eyes on the Couësnon valley, lying before them like a huge sheet of muslin, whose whiteness dulled yet further a sky grey-tinted and loaded with snow. It was one of those days when nature seems speechless, and when the atmosphere sucks up all noises. Thus, though the Blues and their counter-Chouans were marching on the hut in three lines, forming a triangle, which they contracted as they came nearer, the silence was so profound that Mlle. de Verneuil felt oppressed by surroundings which added to her mental anguish a kind of physical sadness. There was ill-fortune in the air. At last, at the point where a little curtain of wood terminated the vista of *échaliers*, she saw a young man leaping the barriers like a squirrel, and running with astonishing speed.

"'Tis he!" she said to herself.

The Gars, dressed plainly like a Chouan, carried his blunderbuss slung behind his goatskin, and, but for the elegance of his movements, would have been unrecognizable. Marie retired hurriedly into the cabin in obedience to one of those instinctive resolves which are as little explicable as fear. But it was not long before the young chief stood, only a step from her, in front of the chimney, where burnt a clear and crackling fire. Both found themselves speechless, and dreaded to look at each other or even to move. One hope united their thoughts, one doubt parted them. It was anguish and rapture at once.

"Sir!" said Mlle. de Verneuil at last, in a broken voice, "anxiety for your safety alone has brought me hither."

"My safety?" he asked bitterly.

"Yes!" she answered. "So long as I stay at Fougères your life is in danger: and I love you too well not to depart this evening. Therefore seek me no more."

"Depart, beloved angel? I will follow you!"

"Follow me? Can you think of such a thing? And the Blues?"

"Why, dearest Marie, what have the Blues to do with our love?"

"It seems to me difficult for you to stay in France near me, and more difficult still for you to leave it with me."

"Is there such a thing as the impossible to a good lover?"

"Yes! I believe that everything is possible. Had *I* not courage enough to give you up for your own sake?"

"What! You gave yourself to a horrible creature whom you did not love, and you will not grant happiness to a man who adores you, whose whole life you fill, who swears to you to be for ever only yours? Listen, Marie; do you love me?"

"Yes," she said.

"Well then, be mine!"

"Have you forgotten that I have resumed the base part of a courtesan, and that it is *you* who must be mine? If I have determined to fly, it is that I may not let the contempt which I may incur fall on your head. Were it not for this fear I might——"

"But if I fear nothing?"

"Who will guarantee me that? I am mistrustful. And in my situation who would not be so? If the love that we inspire be not lasting, at least it should be complete, so as to make us support the world's injustice with joy. What have you done for me? You desire me. Do you think *that* exalts you very high above those who have seen me before? Have you risked your Chouans for an hour of rapture as carelessly as I dismissed the remembrance of the massacred Blues when all was lost for me? Suppose I bade you renounce all your principles, all your hopes, your king who stands in my way, and who very likely will make mock of you when you have laid down your life for him, while I would die for you with a sacred devotion? Suppose I would have you send your submission to the First Consul, so that you might be able to follow me to Paris? Suppose

I insisted that we should go to America to live, far from a world where all is vanity, that I might know whether you really love me for myself as at this moment I love you? In one word, suppose I tried to make you fall to my level instead of raising myself to yours, what would you do?"

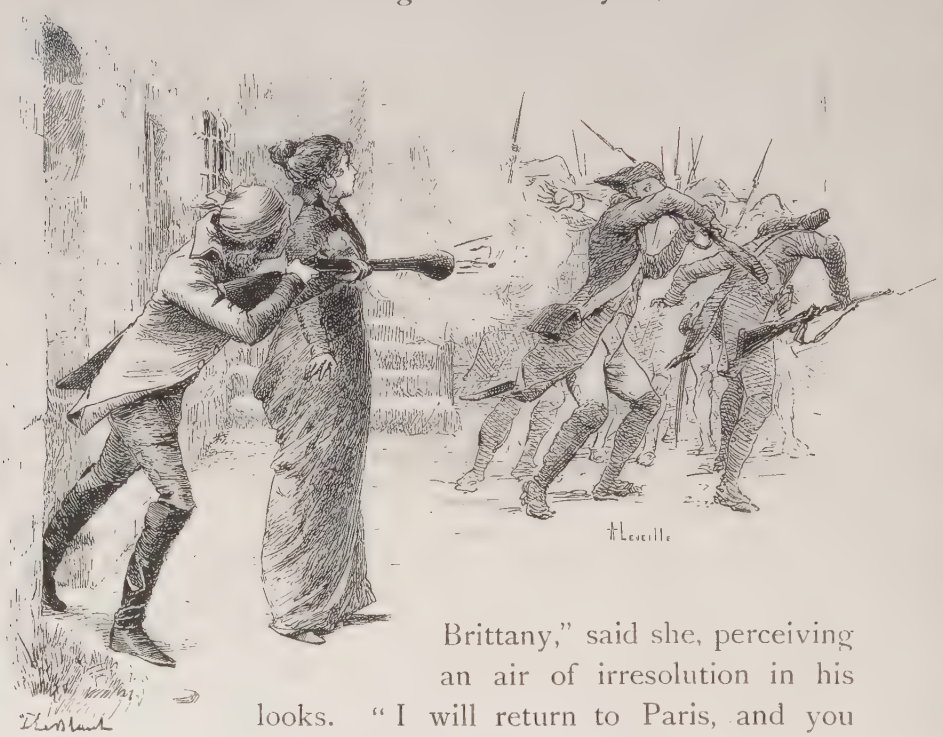
"Hush, Marie! Do not slander yourself. Poor child, I have found you out. Even as my first desire transformed itself into passion, so my passion has transformed itself into love. I know, dearest soul of my soul, that you are noble as your name, great as you are beautiful. And I myself am noble enough and feel myself great enough to force the world to receive you. Is it because I foresee unheard of and incessant delights with you? Is it because I seem to recognize in your soul that precious quality which keeps us ever constant to one woman? I know not the cause: but my love is boundless, and I feel that I cannot live without you—that my life, if you were not near me, would be full of mere disgust."

"What do you mean by 'near me'?"

"Oh, Marie! will you not understand your Alphonse?"

"Ah! you think you are paying me a great compliment in offering me your hand and name?" she said, with affected scorn, but eyeing the marquis closely to catch his slightest thoughts. "How do you know whether you would love me in six months' time? And if you did not, what would become of me? No, no! a mistress is the only woman who is certain of the affection which a man shows her; she has no need to seek such pitiful allies as duty, law, society, the interests of children; and if her power lasts, she finds in it solace and happiness which make the greatest vexations of life endurable. To be your wife, at the risk of one day being a burden to you? To such a fear I would prefer a love fleeting, but true while it lasted, though death and ruin were to come after it. Yes! I could well, and even better than another,

be a virtuous mother, a devoted wife. But, in order that such sentiments may be kept up in a woman's heart, a man must not marry her in a mere gust of passion. Besides, can I tell myself whether I shall care for you to-morrow? No! I will not bring a curse on you; I will leave



Brittany," said she, perceiving an air of irresolution in his looks. "I will return to Paris, and you will not come to seek me there——"

"Well, then! the day after to-morrow, if in the morning you see smoke on the rocks of Saint Sulpice, that evening I shall be at your house as lover, as husband, whichever you will. I shall have put all to the touch!"

"Then, Alphonse, you really love me," she cried with transport, "that you risk your life thus before you give it me?"

He answered not, but looked at her. Her eyes fell: but he read on the passionate countenance of his mistress a madness equal to his own, and he held out his arms to her. A

kind of frenzy seized Marie. She was on the point of falling in languishment on the marquis's breast, with a mind made up to complete surrender, so as out of this fault to forge the greatest of blessings, and to stake her whole future, which, if she came out conqueror from this last test, she would make more than ever certain. But her head had scarcely rested on her lover's shoulder, when a slight noise was heard outside. She tore herself from his arms as if suddenly waked from sleep, and darted from the cabin. Only then could she recover a little coolness and think of her position.

"Perhaps he would have taken me and laughed at me afterwards!" thought she. "Could I believe that, I would kill him! But not yet!" she went on, as she caught sight of Beau-Pied, to whom she made a sign, which the soldier perfectly well understood.

The poor fellow turned on his heel, pretending to have seen nothing, and Mlle. de Verneuil suddenly re-entered the room, begging the young chief to observe the deepest silence by pressing the first finger of her right hand on her lips.

"They are there!" she said, in a stifled voice of terror.

"Who?"

"The Blues!"

"Ah! I will not die at least without having——"

"Yes, take it——"

He seized her cold and unresisting form, and gathered from her lips a kiss full both of horror and delight, for it might well be at once the first and the last. Then they went together to the doorstep, putting their heads in such a posture as to see all without being seen. The marquis perceived Gudin at the head of a dozen men, holding the foot of the Couësnon valley. He turned towards the series of *échaliers*, but the great rotten tree-trunk was guarded by seven soldiers. He climbed the cider-butt, and drove out

the shingled roof so as to be able to jump on the knoll; but he quickly drew his head back from the hole he had made, for Hulot was on the heights, cutting off the road to Fougères. For a moment he stared at his mistress, who uttered a cry of despair as she heard the tramp of the three detachments all round the house.

"Go out first," he said: "you will save me."

As she heard these words, to her sublime, she placed herself, full of happiness, in front of the door, while the marquis cocked his blunderbuss. After carefully calculating the distance between the cottage door and the great tree-trunk, the Gars flung himself upon the seven Blues, sent a hail of slugs upon them from his piece, and forced his way through their midst. The three parties hurried down to the barrier which the chief had leapt, and saw him running across the field with incredible speed.

"Fire! fire! A thousand devils! are you Frenchmen? Fire, dogs!" cried Hulot in a voice of thunder.

As he shouted these words from the top of the knoll, his men and Gudin's delivered a general volley, luckily ill-aimed. The marquis had already reached the barrier at the end of the first field: but just as he passed into the second he was nearly caught by Gudin, who had rushed furiously after him. Hearing this formidable enemy a few steps behind, the Gars redoubled his speed. Nevertheless, Gudin and he reached the bar almost at the same moment: but Montauran hurled his blunderbuss with such address at Gudin's head, that he hit him and stopped his career for a moment. It is impossible to depict the anxiety of Marie, or the interest which Hulot and his men showed at this spectacle. All unconsciously mimicked the gestures of the two runners. The Gars and Gudin had reached, almost together, the curtain, whitened with hoar-frost, which the little wood formed, when suddenly the Republican officer started

back and sheltered himself behind an apple-tree. A score of Chouans, who had not fired before for fear of killing their chief, now showed themselves, and riddled the tree with bullets. Then all Hulot's little force set off at a run to rescue Gudin, who, finding himself weaponless, retired from apple-tree to apple-tree, taking for his runs the intervals when the King's Huntsmen were reloading. His danger did not last long, for the counter-Chouans and Blues, Hulot at their head, came up to support the young officer at the spot where the marquis had thrown away his blunderbuss. Just then Gudin saw his foe sitting exhausted under one of the trees of the clump, and, leaving his comrades to exchange shots with the Chouans, who were ensconced behind the hedge at the side of the field, he outflanked these, and made for the marquis with the eagerness of a wild beast. When they saw this movement, the King's Huntsmen uttered hideous yells to warn their chief, and then, having fired on the counter-Chouans with poachers' luck, they tried to hold their ground against them. But the Blues valiantly stormed the hedge which formed the enemy's rampart, and exacted a bloody vengeance. Then the Chouans took to the road bordering the field in the enclosure of which this scene had passed, and seized the heights which Hulot had made the mistake of abandoning. Before the Blues had had time to collect their ideas, the Chouans had entrenched themselves in the broken crests of the rocks, under cover of which they could, without exposing themselves, fire on Hulot's men if these latter showed signs of coming to attack them. While the commandant with some soldiers went slowly towards the little wood to look for Gudin, the Fougerese stayed behind to strip the dead Chouans and despatch the living—for in this hideous war neither party made prisoners. The marquis once in safety, Chouans and Blues alike recognized the strength of their respective

positions and the uselessness of continuing the strife. Both therefore thought only of withdrawing.

"If I lose this young fellow," cried Hulot, scanning the wood carefully, "I will never make another friend."

"Ah!" said one of the young men of Fougères, who was busy stripping the dead, "here is a bird with yellow feathers!"

And he showed his comrades a purse full of gold pieces, which he had just found in the pocket of a stout man dressed in black.

"But what have we here?" said another, drawing a breviary from the dead man's overcoat. "Why, 'tis holy ware! He is a priest!" cried he, throwing the volume down.

"This thief has turned bankrupt on our hands!" said a third, finding only two crowns of six francs in the pockets of a Chouan whom he was stripping.

"Yes; but he has a capital pair of shoes," answered a soldier, making as though to take them.

"You shall have them if they fall to your share," replied one of the Fougerese, plucking them from the dead man's feet, and throwing them on the pile of goods already heaped together.

A fourth counter-Chouan acted as receiver of the coin, with a view to sharing it out when all the men of the expedition had come together. When Hulot came back with the young officer, whose last attempt to come up with the Gars had been equally dangerous and futile, he found a score of his soldiers and some thirty counter-Chouans standing round eleven dead enemies, whose bodies had been thrown into a furrow drawn along the foot of the hedge.

"Soldiers!" cried the commandant in a stern voice, "I forbid you to share these rags. Fall in, and that in less than no time!"

"Commandant," said a soldier to Hulot, pointing to his own shoes, at whose tips his five bare toes were visible, "all right about the money, but those shoes, commandant?" added he, indicating with his musket-butt the pair of hob-nails. "Those shoes would fit me like a glove."

"So you want English shoes on your feet?" answered Hulot.

"But," said one of the Fougerese, respectfully enough, "we have always, since the war begun, shared the booty."

"I do not interfere with you other fellows," said Hulot, interrupting him roughly; "follow your customs."

"Here, Gudin, here is a purse which is not badly stocked with louis. You have had hard work: your chief will not mind your taking it," said one of his old comrades to the young officer.

Hulot looked askance at Gudin, and saw his face grow pale.

"'Tis my uncle's purse," cried the young man; and, dead-tired as he was, he walked towards the heap of corpses. The first that met his eyes was in fact his uncle's: but he had hardly caught sight of the ruddy face furrowed with bluish streaks, the stiffened arms, and the wound which the gun-shot had made, than he uttered a stifled cry, and said, "Let us march, commandant!"

The troop of Blues set off, Hulot lending his arm to support his young friend.

"God's thunder! you will get over that," said the old soldier.

"But he is dead!" replied Gudin. "Dead! He was my only relation: and though he cursed me he loved me. Had the king come back the whole country might have clamoured for my head, but the old boy would have hid me under his cassock."

"The foolish fellow!" said the National Guards who had

stayed behind to share the spoils. "The old boy was rich: and things being so, he could not have had time to make a will to cut Gudin off." And when the division was made the counter-Chouans caught up the little force of Blues and followed it at some interval.

As night fell terrible anxiety came upon Galope-Chopine's hut, where hitherto life had passed in the most careless simplicity. Barbette and her little boy, carrying on their backs, the one a heavy load of *ajoncs*, the other a supply of grass for the cattle, returned at the usual hour of the family evening meal. When they entered the house, mother and son looked in vain for Galope-Chopine; and never had the wretched chamber seemed to them so large as now in its emptiness. The fireless hearth, the darkness, the silence, all gave them a foreboding of misfortune. When night came Barbette busied herself in lighting a bright fire and two *oribus*—the name given to candles of resin in the district from the shores of Armorica to the Upper Loire, and still used in the Vendôme country districts this side of Amboise. She went through these preparations with the slowness naturally affecting action when it is dominated by some deep feeling. She listened for the smallest noise: but though often deceived by the whistling squalls of wind, she always returned sadly from her journeys to the door of her wretched hut. She cleaned two pitchers, filled them with cider, and set them on the long walnut[1] table. Again and again she gazed at the boy who was watching the baking of the buckwheat cakes, but without being able to speak to him. For a moment the little boy's eyes rested on the two nails which served as supports to his father's duck-gun, and Barbette shuddered as they both saw that the place was empty. The

[1] The table and bench (see below) have been previously described as of *chestnut*. It is fair to say that *noyer*, though specifically = "walnut," is etymologically any nut tree.

silence was broken only by the lowing of the cows or by the steady drip of the cider drops from the cask-spile. The poor woman sighed as she got ready in three platters of brown earthenware a sort of soup composed of milk, cakes cut up small, and boiled chestnuts.

"They fought in the field that belongs to the Beraudière," said the little boy.

"Go and look there," answered his mother.

The boy ran thither, perceived by the moonlight the heap of dead, found that his father was not amongst them, and came back whistling cheerfully, for he had picked up some five-franc pieces which had been trodden under foot by the victors, and forgotten in the mud. He found his mother sitting on a stool at the fireside and busy spinning hemp. He shook his head to Barbette, who hardly dared believe in any good news: and then, ten o'clock having struck from Saint Léonard's, the child went to bed, after muttering a prayer to the Holy Virgin of Auray. At daybreak Barbette, who had not slept, uttered a cry of joy as she heard, echoing afar off, a sound of heavy hobnailed shoes which she knew; and soon Galope-Chopine showed his sullen face.

"Thanks to Saint Labre, to whom I have promised a fine candle, the Gars is safe! Do not forget that we owe the saint three candles now."

Then Galope-Chopine seized a pitcher and drained the whole of its contents without drawing breath. When his wife had served up his soup and had relieved him of his duck-gun, and when he had sat down on the walnut bench, he said, drawing closer to the fire :

"How did the Blues and the counter-Chouans get here? The fighting was at Florigny. What devil can have told them that the Gars was at our house? for nobody but himself, his fair wench, and ourselves knew it."

The woman grew pale. "The counter-Chouans persuaded me that they were gars of Saint George," said she, trembling; "and it was I who told them where the Gars was."

Galope-Chopine's face blanched in his turn, and he left his plate on the table-edge.

"I sent the child to tell you," went on Barbette in her terror; "but he did not meet you."

The Chouan rose and struck his wife so fierce a blow that she fell half dead on the bed. "Accursed wench," he said, "you have killed me!" Then, seized with fear, he caught his wife in his arms. "Barbette!" he cried, "Barbette! Holy Virgin! my hand was too heavy!"

"Do you think," she said, opening her eyes, "that Marche-à-Terre will come to know of it?"

"The Gars," answered the Chouan, "has given orders to inquire whence the treachery came."

"But did he tell Marche-à-Terre?"

"Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre were at Florigny."

Barbette breathed more freely. "If they touch a hair of your head," said she, "I will rinse their glasses with vinegar!"

"Ah! my appetite is gone!" cried Galope-Chopine sadly. His wife pushed another full jug in front of him, but he did not even notice it; and two great tears furrowed Barbette's cheek, moistening the wrinkles of her withered face.

"Listen, wife. You must pile some faggots to-morrow morning on the Saint Sulpice rocks, to the right of Saint Léonard's, and set fire to them. 'Tis the signal arranged between the Gars and the old rector of Saint George, who is coming to say mass for him."

"Is he going to Fougères, then?"

"Yes, to his fair wench. I have got some running about to do to-day by reason of it. I think he is going to marry her and carry her off, for he bade me go and hire horses and relay them on the Saint Malo road."

Thereupon the weary Galope-Chopine went to bed for some hours; and then he set about his errands. The next morning he came home, after having punctually discharged the commissions with which the marquis had intrusted him. When he learnt that Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche had not appeared, he quieted the fears of his wife, who set out, almost reassured, for the rocks of Saint Sulpice, where the day before she had prepared on the hummock facing Saint Léonard some faggots covered with hoar-frost. She led by the hand her little boy, who carried some fire in a broken sabot. Hardly had his wife and child disappeared round the roof of the shed, when Galope-Chopine heard two men leaping over the last of the series of barriers, and little by little he saw, through a fog which was pretty thick, angular shapes, looking like uncertain shadows.

"'Tis Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre!" he said to himself with a start. The two Chouans, who had now reached the little courtyard, showed their dark faces, resembling under their great shabby hats the figures that engravers put into landscapes.

"Good day, Galope-Chopine!" said Marche-à-Terre gravely.

"Good day, Master Marche-à-Terre," humbly replied Barbette's husband. "Will you come in and drink a pitcher or two? There is cold cake and fresh-made butter."

"We shall not refuse, cousin," said Pille-Miche; and the two Chouans entered.

This overture had nothing in it alarming to Galope-Chopine, who bustled about to fill three pitchers at his great cask, while Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre, seated at each side of the long table on the glistening benches, cut the bannocks for themselves, and spread them with luscious yellow butter, which shed little bubbles of milk under the knife. Galope-Chopine set the foam-crowned pitchers full of cider before his guests, and the three Chouans began to eat: but from time to time the host cast sidelong glances on Marche-à-Terre, eager to satisfy his thirst.

"Give me your snuff-box," said Marche-à-Terre to Pille-Miche; and after sharply shaking several pinches into the hollow of his hand, the Breton took his tobacco like a man who wished to wind himself up for some serious business.

"'Tis cold," said Pille-Miche, rising to go and shut the upper part of the door.

The daylight, darkened by the fog, had no further access to the room than by the little window, and lighted but feebly the table and the two benches; but the fire shed its ruddy glow over them. At the same moment Galope-Chopine, who had finished filling his guests' jugs a second time, set these before them. But they refused to drink, threw down their flapping hats, and suddenly assumed a solemn air. Their gestures and the inquiring looks they cast at one another made Galope-Chopine shudder, and the red woollen caps which were on their heads seemed to him as though they were blood.

"Bring us your hatchet," said Marche-à-Terre.

"But, Master Marche-à-Terre, what do you want it for?"

"Come, cousin," said Pille-Miche, putting up the mull which Marche-à-Terre handed to him, "you know well enough. You are sentenced." And the two Chouans rose together, clutching their rifles.

"Master Marche-à-Terre, I have not said a word about the Gars——"

"I tell you to fetch your hatchet," answered the Chouan.

The wretched Galope-Chopine stumbled against the rough wood-work of his child's bed, and three five-franc pieces fell on the floor. Pille-Miche picked them up.

"Aha! the Blues have given you new coin," cried Marche-à-Terre.

"'Tis as true as that Saint Labre's image is there," replied Galope-Chopine, "that I said *nothing*. Barbette mistook the counter-Chouans for the gars of Saint Georges, that is all."

"Why do you talk about business to your wife?" answered Marche-à-Terre savagely.

"Besides, cousin, we are not asking for explanations, but for your hatchet. You are sentenced." And at a sign from his comrade Pille-Miche helped him to seize the victim. When he found himself in the two Chouans' grasp, Galope-Chopine lost all his fortitude, fell on his knees, and raised despairing hands towards his two executioners.

"My good friends! my cousin! what is to become of my little boy?"

"I will take care of him," said Marche-à-Terre.

"Dear comrades," said Galope-Chopine, whose face had become of a ghastly whiteness, "I am not ready to die. Will you let me depart without confessing? You have the right to take my life, but not to make me forfeit eternal happiness."

"'Tis true!" said Marche-à-Terre, looking at Pille-Miche, and the two Chouans remained for a moment in the greatest perplexity, unable to decide this case of conscience. Galope-Chopine listened for the least rustle that the wind made, as if he still kept up some hope. The sound of the cider dripping regularly from the cask made him cast a mechanical look at the barrel and give a melancholy sigh. Suddenly Pille-Miche took his victim by the arm, drew him into the corner, and said :

"Confess all your sins to me. I will tell them over to a priest of the true church : he shall give me absolution : and if there be penance to do, I will do it for you."

Galope-Chopine obtained some respite by his manner of acknowledging his transgressions : but despite the length and details of the crimes, he came at last to the end of the list.

"Alas!" said he in conclusion, "after all, cousin, since I am addressing you as a confessor, I protest to you by the holy name of God that I have nothing to reproach myself with, except having buttered my bread too much here and there, and I call Saint Labre, who is over the chimney, to witness that I said nothing about the Gars. No, my good friends, I am no traitor!"

"Go to, cousin, 'tis well! Get up, you can arrange all that with the good God at one time or another."

"But let me say one little good-bye to Barbe—"

"Come," answered Marche-à-Terre, "if you wish us not to think worse of you than is needful, behave like a Breton, and make a clean end!"

The two Chouans once more seized Galope-Chopine and stretched him on the bench, where he gave no other sign of resistance than the convulsive movements of mere animal instinct. At the last he uttered some smothered shrieks, which ceased at the moment that the heavy thud of the axe

was heard. The head was severed at a single blow. Marche-à-Terre took it by a tuft of hair, left the room, and, after searching, found a stout nail in the clumsy framework of the door, round which he twisted the hair he held, and left the bloody head hanging there, without even closing the eyes. Then the two Chouans washed their hands without

the least hurry in a great pan full of water, took up their hats and their rifles, and clambered over the barrier, whistling the air of the ballad of *The Captain*.[1] At the end of the

[1] This famous folk-song has been Englished by Mr. Swinburne in "May Janet," and I think by others. It might have been wiser to borrow a version from one of these. But silk on homespun is bad heraldry. The following is at any rate pretty close, and in verse suiting its neighbour prose. If the third stanza does not seem clear, I can only say that no one can be very sure what *On lui tendait les voiles Dans tout le régiment* does mean.—*Translator's Note.*

field Pille-Miche shouted in a husky voice some stanzas chosen by chance from this simple song, the rustic strains of which were carried afar off by the wind.

"At the first town where they did alight,
Her lover dressed her in satin white.

At the second town, her lover bold
He dressed her in silver and eke in gold.

So fair she was that their stuff they lent
To do her grace through the regiment."

The tune grew slowly indistinct as the two Chouans retired: but the silence of the country was so deep that some notes reached the ear of Barbette, who was coming home, her child in her hand. So popular is this song in the west of France, that a peasant woman never hears it unmoved: and thus Barbette unconsciously struck up the first verses of the ballad:

"Come to the war, come, fairest May,
Come, for we must no longer stay.

Captain brave, take thou no care,
Not for thee is my daughter fair.

Neither on land, nor yet on sea,
Shall aught but treason give her to thee.

The father strips his girl and he
Takes her and flings her into the sea.

But wiser, I trow, was the captain stout,
He swims and fetches his lady out.

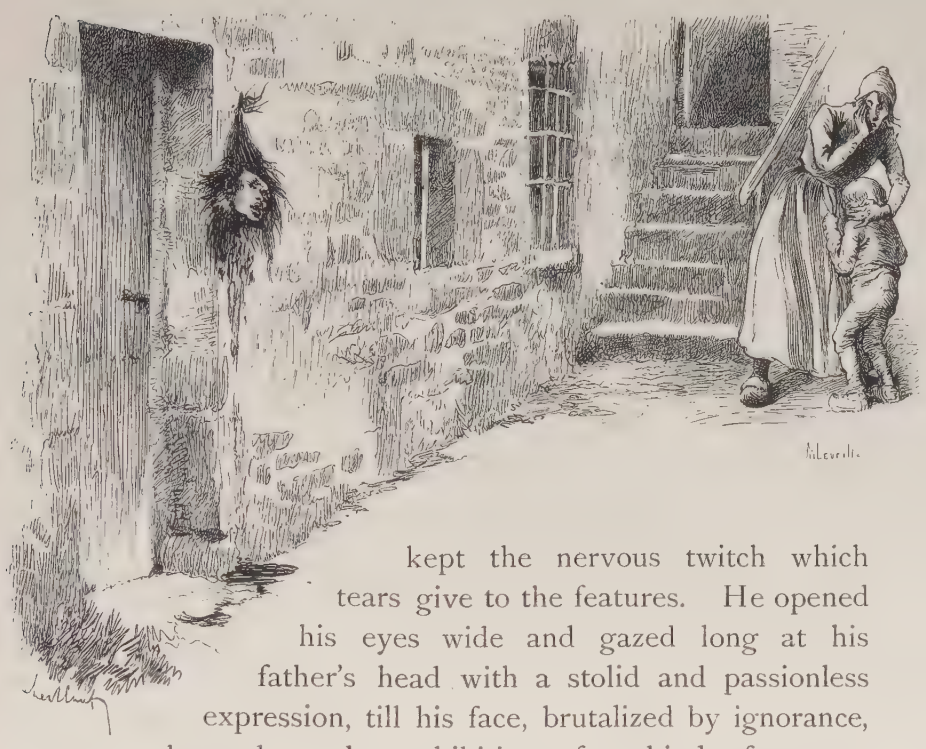
Come to the war, etc."

At the same moment at which Barbette found herself catching up the ballad at the point where Pille-Miche had begun it, she reached her own courtyard: her tongue froze to her mouth, she stood motionless, and a loud shriek, suddenly checked, issued from her gaping lips.

"What is the matter, dear mother?" asked the child.

"Go by yourself," muttered Barbette, drawing her hand from his, and pushing him forward with strange roughness. "You are fatherless and motherless now!"

The child rubbed his shoulder as he cried, saw the head nailed on the door, and his innocent countenance speechlessly



kept the nervous twitch which tears give to the features. He opened his eyes wide and gazed long at his father's head with a stolid and passionless expression, till his face, brutalized by ignorance, changed to the exhibition of a kind of savage curiosity. Suddenly Barbette caught her child's hand once more, squeezed it fiercely, and drew him with rapid steps towards the house. As Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre were stretching Galope-Chopine on the bench, one of his shoes had fallen off under his neck in such a fashion that it was filled with his blood: and this was the first object that the widow saw.

"Take your sabot off!" said the mother to the son. "Put your foot in there. 'Tis well! And now," said she,

in a hollow voice, "remember always this shoe of your father's! Never put shoe on your own foot without thinking of that which was full of blood shed by the *Chuins:* and kill the *Chuins!*"

As she spoke, she shook her head with so spasmodic a movement that the tresses of her black hair fell back on her neck, and gave a sinister look to her face.

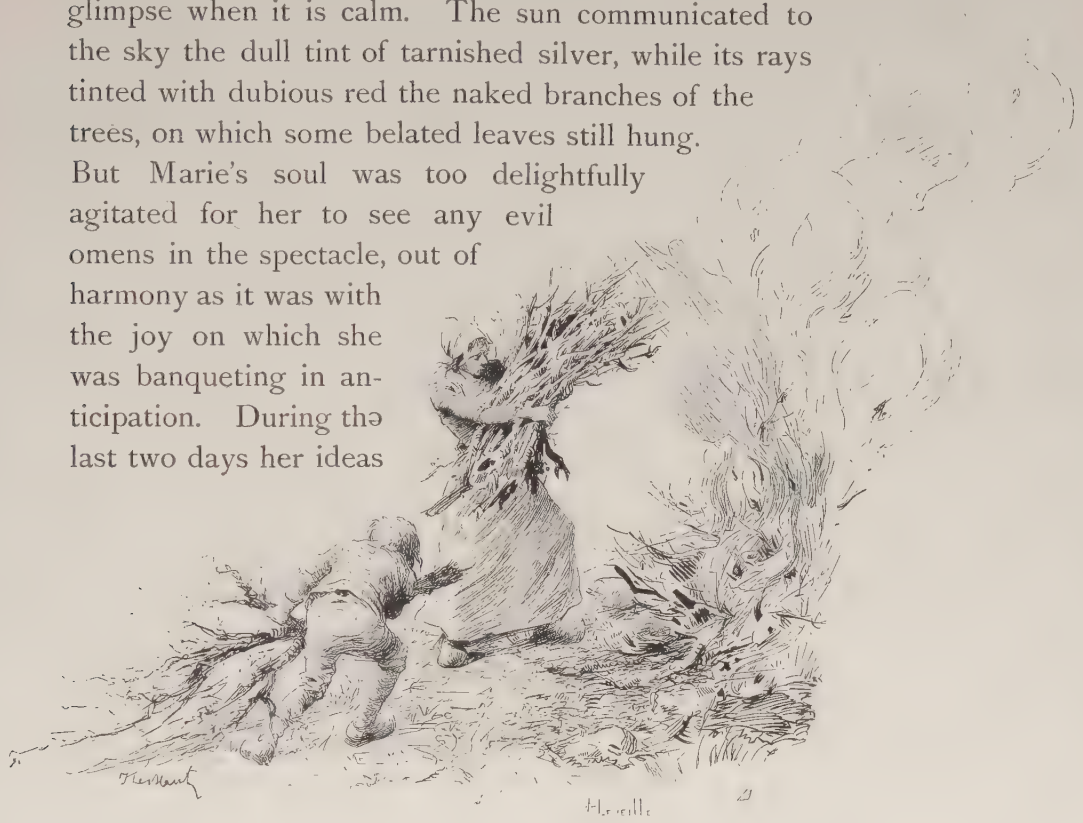
"I call Saint Labre to witness," she went on, "that I devote you to the Blues. You shall be a soldier that you may avenge your father. Kill the *Chuins!* Kill them, and do as I do! Ha! they have taken my husband's head: I will give the head of the Gars to the Blues!"

She made one spring to the bed-head, took a little bag of money from a hiding-place, caught once more the hand of her astonished son, and dragged him off fiercely without giving him time to replace his sabot. They both walked rapidly towards Fougères without turning either of their heads to the hut they were leaving. When they arrived at the crest of the crags of Saint Sulpice, Barbette stirred the faggot-fire, and the child helped to heap it with green broom shoots covered with rime, so that the smoke might be thicker.

"That will last longer than your father's life, than mine, or than the Gars!" said Barbette to her boy, pointing savagely to the fire.

At the same moment as that at which Galope-Chopine's widow and his son with the Bloody Foot were watching the eddying of the smoke with a gloomy air of vengeance and curiosity, Mlle. de Verneuil had her eyes fixed on the same rock, endeavouring, but in vain, to discover the marquis's promised signal. The fog, which had gradually thickened, buried the whole country under a veil whose tints of grey hid even those parts of the landscape which were nearest to the town. She looked by turns with an anxiety which did

not lack sweetness, to the rocks, the castle, the buildings which seemed in the fog like patches of fog blacker still. Close to her window some trees stood out of the blue-grey background like madrepores of which the sea gives a glimpse when it is calm. The sun communicated to the sky the dull tint of tarnished silver, while its rays tinted with dubious red the naked branches of the trees, on which some belated leaves still hung. But Marie's soul was too delightfully agitated for her to see any evil omens in the spectacle, out of harmony as it was with the joy on which she was banqueting in anticipation. During the last two days her ideas



had altered strangely. The ferocity, the disorderly bursts, of her passion had slowly undergone the influence of that equable warmth which true love communicates to life. The certainty of being loved—a certainty after which she had quested through so many dangers—had produced in her the desire of returning to those conventions of society which sanction happiness, and which she had herself only abandoned in despair. A mere moment of love seemed to her a futility. And then she saw herself suddenly restored from

the social depths where she had been plunged by misfortune to the exalted rank in which for a brief space her father had placed her. Her vanity, which had been stifled under the cruel changes of a passion by turns fortunate and slighted, woke afresh, and showed her all the advantages of a high position. Born as she had been to be "her ladyship," would not the effect of marrying Montauran be for her action and life in the sphere which was her own? After having known the chances of a wholly adventurous life, she could, better than another woman, appreciate the greatness of the feelings which lie at the root of the family relation. Nor would marriage, motherhood, and the cares of both be for her so much a task as a rest. She loved the calm and virtuous life, a glimpse of which opened across this latest storm, with the same feeling which makes a woman virtuous to satiety cast longing looks on an illicit passion. Virtue was for her a new allurement.

"Perhaps," she said, as she came back from the window without having seen fire on the rocks of Saint Sulpice, "I have trifled with him not a little? But have I not thus come to know how much I was loved? Francine! 'tis no more a dream! This night I shall be Marquise de Montauran! What have I done to deserve such complete happiness? Oh! I love him: and love alone can be the price of love. Yet God, no doubt, deigns to reward me for having kept my heart warm in spite of so many miseries, and to make me forget my sufferings. For you know, child, I have suffered much!"

"To-night, Marie? You Marquise de Montauran? For my part, till it is actually true, I shall think I dream. Who told him all your real nature?"

"Why, dear child, he has not only fine eyes, but a soul too! If you had seen him, as I have, in the midst of danger! Ah! he must know how to love well, he is so brave!"

"If you love him so much, why do you allow him to come to Fougères?"

"Had we a moment to talk together when they took us by surprise? Besides, is it not a proof of his love? And can one ever have enough of that? Meanwhile, do my hair."

But she herself, with electric movements, disarranged a hundred times the successful arrangements of her head-dress, mingling thoughts which were still stormy with the cares of a coquette. While adding a fresh wave to her hair, or making its tresses more glossy, she kept asking herself, with remains of mistrust, whether the marquis was not deceiving her; and then she concluded that such trickery would be inexplicable, since he exposed himself boldly to immediate vengeance by coming to seek her at Fougères. As she studied cunningly at her glass the effects of a sidelong glance, of a smile, of a slight contraction of the forehead, of an attitude of displeasure, of love, or of disdain, she was still seeking some woman's wile to test the young chief's heart up to the very last moment.

"You are right, Francine!" she said. "I would, like you, that the marriage were over. This day is the last of my days of cloud—it is big either with my death or with our happiness. This fog is hateful," she added, looking over towards the still mist-wrapped summits of Saint Sulpice. Then she set to work to arrange the silk and muslin curtains which decked the window, amusing herself with intercepting the light, so as to produce in the apartment a voluptuous clear-obscure.

"Francine," said she, "take these toys which encumber the chimney-piece away, and leave nothing there but the clock and the two Dresden vases, in which I will myself arrange the winter flowers that Corentin found for me. Let

all the chairs go out, I will have nothing here but the sofa and one armchair. When you have done, child, you shall sweep the carpet, so as to bring out the colour of it: and then you shall put candles into the chimney sconces and the candlesticks."

Marie gazed long and attentively at the old tapestry which covered the walls of the room. Led by her native taste, she succeeded in finding, amid the warp, bright shades of such tints as might establish connection between this old-world decoration and the furniture and accessories of the boudoir, either by harmony of colours or by attractive contrasts. The same principle guided her in arranging the flowers with which she filled the twisted vases that adorned the room. The sofa was placed near the fire. At each side of the bed, which stood by the wall parallel to that where the fireplace was, she put, on two little gilt tables, great Dresden vases full of foliage and flowers which exhaled the sweetest perfumes. She shivered more than once as she arranged the sweeping drapery of green damask that overhung the bed, and as she studied the curving lines of the flowered coverlet wherewith she hid the bed itself. Preparations of this kind always have an indefinable secret joy, and bring with them so delightful a provocative that ofttimes in the midst of such provision of delight a woman forgets all her doubts, as Mlle. de Verneuil was then forgetting hers. Is there not a kind of religion in this abundant care taken for a beloved object who is not there to see it or reward it, but who is to pay for it later with the smile of approbation, which graceful preparations of this kind, always so well understood, obtain? Then, so to speak, do women yield themselves up beforehand to love: and there is not one who does not say to herself, as Mlle. de Verneuil thought, "To-night how happy I shall be!" The most innocent of them at these times

inscribes this sweet hope in the innermost folds of muslin or of silk, and then the harmony which she establishes around her insensibly stamps all things with a love-breathing look. In the centre of this voluptuous atmosphere, things become for her living beings, witnesses; and already she transforms them into accomplices of her coming joys. At each movement, at each thought, she is bold to rob the future. Soon she waits no more, she hopes no more, but she finds fault with silence, and the least noise is challenged to give her an omen, till at last doubt comes and places its crooked claws on her heart. She burns, she is agitated, she feels herself tortured by thoughts which exert themselves like purely physical forces: by turns she triumphs and is martyred, after a fashion which, but for the hope of joy, she could not endure. Twenty times had Mlle. de Verneuil lifted the curtains in hopes of seeing a pillar of smoke rising above the rocks: but the fog seemed to grow greyer and greyer each moment, and in these grey tints her fancy at last showed her sinister omens. Finally, in a moment of impatience, she dropped the curtain, assuring herself that she would come and lift it no more. She

looked discontentedly at the room into which she had breathed a soul and a voice, and asked herself whether it would all be in vain. The thought recalled her to her arrangements.

"Little one," she said to Francine, drawing her into a dressing-room close to her own, and lighted by a round window, giving upon the dark corner where the town ramparts joined the rocks of the Promenade, "put this right, and let all be in order. As for the drawing-room, you can leave it untidy if you like," she added, accompanying her words by one of those smiles which women reserve for their intimates, and the piquant delicacy of which men can never know.

"Ah, how beautiful you are!" said the little Breton girl.

"Why, fools that we all are, is not a lover always our greatest adornment?"

Francine left her lying languidly on the ottoman, and withdrew step by step, guessing that whether she were loved or not, her mistress would never give up Montauran.

"Are you sure of what you are telling me, old woman?" said Hulot to Barbette, who had recognized him as she entered Fougères.

"Have you got eyes? Then, my good sir, look at the rocks of Saint Sulpice; there, to the right of Saint Léonard!"

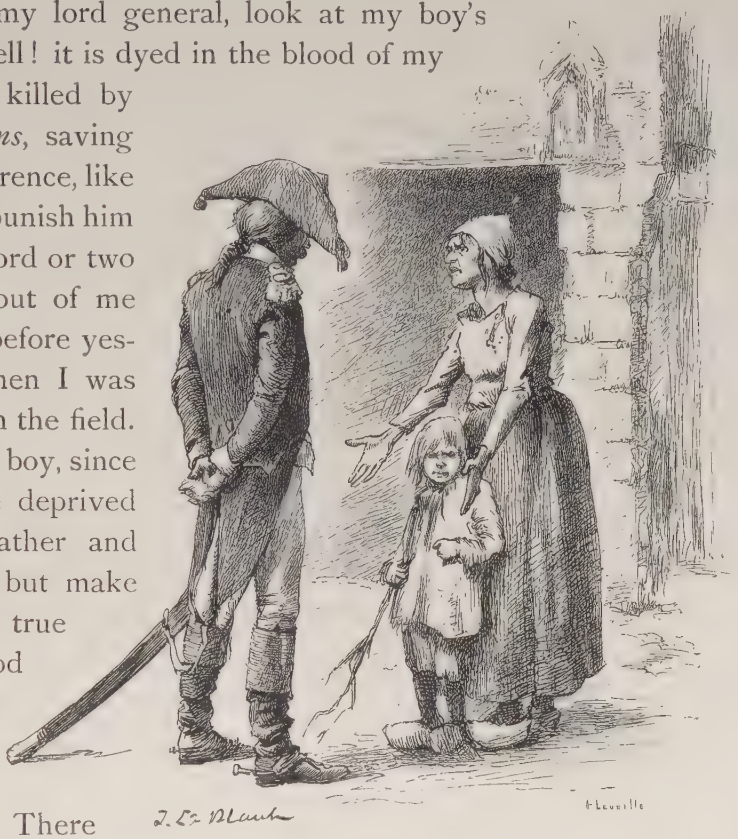
Corentin turned his eyes towards the summit in the direction in which Barbette's finger pointed: and as the fog began to lift, he was able to see clearly enough the pillar of white smoke of which Galope-Chopine's widow had spoken.

"But when will he come? eh, old woman? Will it be at even, or at night?"

"Good sir," answered Barbette, "I know nothing of that."

"Why do you betray your own side?" said Hulot quickly, after drawing the peasant woman some steps away from Corentin.

"Ah! my lord general, look at my boy's foot! Well! it is dyed in the blood of my husband, killed by the *Chuins*, saving your reverence, like a calf, to punish him for the word or two you got out of me the day before yesterday when I was at work in the field. Take my boy, since you have deprived him of father and mother: but make him a true Blue, good sir! and let him kill many *Chuins*. There are two hundred crowns, keep them for him: if he is careful, he should go far with them, since his father took twelve years to get them together."



Hulot stared with wonder at the pale and wrinkled peasant woman, whose eyes were tearless.

"But, mother," said he, "how about yourself? What is to become of you? It would be better for you to keep this money."

"For me," she said sadly, shaking her head; "I have no

more need of anything. You might stow me away in the innermost corner of Melusine's tower," and she pointed to one of the castle turrets, "but the *Chuins* would find the way to come and kill me."

She kissed her boy with an expression of gloomy sorrow, gazed at him, shed a tear or two, gazed at him once more, and disappeared.

"Commandant," said Corentin, "this is one of those opportunities to profit by which needs rather two good heads than one. We know all, and we know nothing. To surround Mlle. de Verneuil's house at this moment would be to set her against us: and you, I, your counter-Chouans, and your two battalions all put together are not men enough to fight against this girl if she takes it into her head to save her *ci-devant*. The fellow is a courtier, and therefore wary: he is a young man, and a stout-hearted one. We shall never be able to catch him at his entry into Fougères. Besides, he is very likely here already. Are we to search the houses? That would be futile: for it tells you nothing, it gives the alarm, and it disquiets the townsfolk——"

"I am going," said Hulot, out of temper, "to order the sentinel on guard at Saint Léonard to lengthen his beat by three paces, so that he will come in front of Mlle. de Verneuil's house. I shall arrange a signal with each sentry: I shall take up my own post at the guard-house: and when the entrance of any young man is reported to me I shall take a corporal with four men, and——"

"And," said Corentin, interrupting the eager soldier, "what if the young man is not the marquis? if the marquis does not enter by the gate? if he is already with Mlle. de Verneuil? if—— if——?"

And with this Corentin looked at the commandant with an air of superiority which was so humiliating that the old warrior cried out, "A thousand thunders! go about your own

business, citizen of hell! What have I to do with all that? If the cockchafer drops into one of my guard-houses, I must needs shoot him: if I hear that he is in a house I must needs go and surround him, catch him, and shoot him there. But devil take me if I puzzle my brains in order to stain my own uniform!"

"Commandant, letters signed by three ministers bid you obey Mlle. de Verneuil."

"Then, citizen, let her come herself and order me. I will see what can be done then."

"Very well, citizen," replied Corentin haughtily. "She shall do so without delay. She shall tell you herself the very hour and minute of the *ci-devant's* arrival. Perhaps, indeed, she will not be at ease till she has seen you posting your sentinels and surrounding her house."

"The devil has turned man!" said the old demi-brigadier sorrowfully to himself as he saw Corentin striding hastily up the Queen's Staircase, on which this scene had passed, and reaching the gate of Saint Léonard. "He will hand over Citizen Montauran to me bound hand and foot," went on Hulot, talking to himself; "and I shall have the nuisance of presiding over a court-martial. After all," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "the Gars is an enemy of the Republic; he killed my poor Gérard, and it will be at worst one noble the less. Let him go to the devil!" And he turned briskly on his boot-heel, and went the rounds of the town whistling the Marseillaise.

Mlle. de Verneuil was deep in one of those reveries whose secrets remain as it were buried in the abysses of the soul, and whose crowd of contradictory thoughts often show their victims that a stormy and passionate life may be held between four walls, without leaving the couch on which existence is then passed. In presence of the catastrophe of the drama which she had come to seek, the girl summoned up before

her by turns the scenes of love and anger which had so powerfully agitated her life during the ten days that had passed since her first meeting with the marquis. As she did so the sound of a man's step echoed in the saloon beyond her apartment: she started, the door opened, she turned her head sharply, and saw—Corentin.

"Little traitress!" said the head-agent of police; "will the fancy take you to deceive me again? Ah, Marie, Marie! You are playing a very dangerous game in leaving me out of it, and arranging your *coups* without consulting me! If the marquis has escaped his fate——"

"It is not your fault, you mean?" answered Mlle. de Verneuil, with profound sarcasm. "Sir!" she went on in a grave voice, "by what right have you once more entered my house?"

"*Your* house?" asked he, with bitter emphasis.

"You remind me," replied she, with an air of nobility, "that I am not at home. Perhaps you intentionally chose this house for the safer commission of your murders here? I will leave it: I would take refuge in a desert rather than any longer receive——"

"Say the word — spies!" retorted Corentin. "But this house is neither yours nor mine: it belongs to Government: and as to leaving it, you would do nothing of the kind," added he, darting a devilish look at her.

Mlle. de Verneuil rose in an impulse of wrath, and made a step or two forwards: but she stopped suddenly as she saw Corentin lift the window curtain and begin to smile as he requested her to come close to him.

"Do you see that pillar of smoke?" said he, with the intense calm which he knew how to preserve on his pallid face, however deeply he was moved.

"What connection can there be between my departure and the weeds that they are burning there?" asked she.

"Why is your voice so changed in tone?" answered Corentin. "Poor little girl!" he added gently, "I know all. The marquis is coming to-day to Fougères, and it is not with the intention of giving him up to us that you have arranged this boudoir, these flowers, these wax-lights, in so luxurious a fashion."

Mlle. de Verneuil grew pale as she saw the marquis's death written in the eyes of this tiger with a human countenance: and the passion which she felt for her lover rose near madness. Every hair of her head seemed to pour into it a fierce and intolerable pain, and she fell upon the ottoman. Corentin stood for a minute with his arms folded, half-pleased at a torture which avenged him for the sarcasm and scorn which this woman had heaped on him, half-vexed at seeing the sufferings of a creature whose yoke, heavy as it might be, always had something agreeable.

"She loves him!" muttered he.

"Love him?" cried she, "what does that word mean? Corentin! he is my life, my soul, the breath of my being." She flung herself at the feet of the man, whose calm was terrible to her.

"Soul of mud!" she said, "I would rather abase myself to gain his life than to lose it. I would save him at the price of every drop of my blood! Speak! What will you have?"

Corentin started.

"I came to put myself at your orders, Marie," he said, the tones of his voice full of gentleness, and raising her up with graceful politeness. "Yes, Marie! your insults will not hinder me from being all yours, provided that you deceive me no more. You know, Marie, that no man fools me with impunity."

"Ah! if you would have me love you, Corentin, help me to save him!"

"Well, at what hour does the marquis come?" said he, constraining himself to make the inquiry in a calm tone.

"Alas! I know not."

They gazed at each other without speaking.

"I am lost!" said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself.

"She is deceiving me," thought Corentin. "Marie," he continued aloud, "I have two maxims: the one is, never to believe a word of what women say, which is the way not to be their dupe; the other is, always to inquire whether they have not some interest in doing the contrary of what they say, and behaving in a manner the reverse of the actions which they are good enough to confide to us. I think we understand each other now?"

"Excellently," replied Mlle. de Verneuil. "You want proofs of my good faith: but I am keeping them for the minute when you shall have given me some proofs of yours."

"Good-bye, then, mademoiselle," said Corentin drily.

"Come," continued the girl, smiling, "take a chair. Sit there and do not sulk, or else I shall manage very well to save the marquis without you. As for the three hundred thousand francs, the prospect of which is always before your eyes, I can tell them out for you in gold there on the chimney-piece the moment that the marquis is in safety."

Corentin rose, fell back a step or two, and stared at Mlle. de Verneuil.

"You have become rich in a very short time," said he, in a tone the bitterness of which was still disguised.

"Montauran," said Marie, with a smile of compassion, "could himself offer you much more than that for his ransom, so prove to me that you have the means of holding him scatheless, and——"

"Could not you," said Corentin suddenly, "let him escape the same moment that he comes? For Hulot does not know the hour and——"

He stopped as if he reproached himself with having said too much.

"But can it be *you* who are applying to *me* for a device," he went on, smiling in the most natural manner. "Listen, Marie! I am convinced of your sincerity. Promise to make me amends for all that I lose in your service, and I will lull the blockhead of a commandant to sleep so neatly that the marquis will enjoy as much liberty at Fougères as at Saint James."

"I promise you!" replied the girl with a kind of solemnity.

"Not in that way," said he. "Swear it by your mother."

Mlle. de Verneuil started: but raising a trembling hand, she gave the oath demanded by this man, whose manner had just changed so suddenly.

"You can do with me as you will," said Corentin. "Do not deceive me, and you will bless me this evening."

"I believe you, Corentin!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, quite touched.

She bowed farewell to him with a gentle inclination of her head, and he on his side smiled with amiability, mingled with surprise, as he saw the expression of tender melancholy on her face.

"What a charming creature!" cried Corentin to himself as he departed. "Shall I never possess her and make her at once the instrument of my fortune and the source of my

pleasures? To think of her throwing herself at my feet! Oh, yes! the marquis shall perish; and if I cannot obtain the girl except by plunging her into the mire, I will plunge her. Anyhow," he thought, as he came to the square whither his steps had led him without his own knowledge, "perhaps she really distrusts me no longer. A hundred thousand crowns at a moment's notice! She thinks me avaricious. Either it is a trick, or she has married him already."

Corentin, lost in thought, could not make up his mind to any certain course of action. The fog, which the sun had dispersed towards midday, was regaining all its force by degrees, and became so thick that he could no longer make out the trees even at a short distance.

"Here is a new piece of ill-luck," said he to himself, as he went slowly home. "It is impossible to see anything half-a-dozen paces off. The weather is protecting our lovers. How is one to watch a house which is guarded by such a fog as this? Who goes there?" cried he, clutching the arm of a stranger who appeared to have escaladed the Promenade across the most dangerous crags.

"'Tis I," said a childish voice simply.

"Ah! the little boy Redfoot. Don't you wish to avenge your father?" asked Corentin.

"Yes!" said the child.

"'Tis well. Do you know the Gars?"

"Yes."

"Better still. Well, do not leave me. Do exactly whatsoever I tell you, and you will finish your mother's work and gain big *sous*. Do you like big *sous?*"

"Yes."

"You like big *sous* and you want to kill the Gars? I will take care of you. Come, Marie," said Corentin to himself after a pause, "you shall give him up to us yourself!

She is too excitable to judge calmly of the blow I am going to deal her: and besides, passion never reflects. She does not know the marquis's handwriting, so here is the moment to spread a net for her into which her character will make her rush blindly. But to assure the success of my trick I have need of Hulot, and I must hasten to see him."

At the same time Mlle. de Verneuil and Francine were debating the means of extricating the marquis from the dubious generosity of Corentin and the bayonets of Hulot.

"I will go and warn him," said the Breton girl.

"Silly child! do you know where he is? Why I, with all my heart's instinct to aid me, might search long without meeting him."

After having devised no small number of the idle projects which are so easy to carry out by the fireside, Mlle. de Verneuil cried, "When I see him, his danger will inspire me!"

Then she amused herself, like all ardent spirits, with the determination not to resolve till the last moment, trusting in her star, or in that instinctive address which seldom deserts women. Never, perhaps, had her heart throbbed so wildly. Sometimes she remained as if thunderstruck, with fixed eyes: and then, at the least noise, she quivered like the half-uprooted trees which the wood-cutter shakes strongly with a rope to hasten their fall. Suddenly a violent explosion, produced by the discharge of a dozen guns, echoed in the distance: Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale, caught Francine's hand, and said to her:

"I die: they have killed him!"

The heavy tread of a soldier was heard in the saloon, and the terrified Francine rose and ushered in a corporal. The Republican, after making a military salute to Mlle. de Verneuil, presented to her some letters written on not very clean paper. The soldier, receiving no answer from the

young lady, withdrew, observing, "Madame, 'tis from the commandant."

Mlle. de Verneuil, a prey to sinister forebodings, read the letter, which seemed to have been hastily written by Hulot:

"'Mademoiselle, my counter-Chouans have seized one of the Gars's messengers, who has just been shot. Among the letters found on him, that which I enclose may be of some concern to you, etc.'"

"Thank heaven! 'tis not he whom they have killed," cried she, throwing the letter into the fire.

She breathed more freely, and greedily read the note which had been sent her. It was from the marquis, and appeared to be addressed to Madame du Gua:

"'No, my angel, I shall not go to-night to the Vivetière. To-night you will lose your wager with the count, and I shall triumph over the Republic in the person of this delicious girl, who, you will agree, is surely worth one night. 'Tis the only real advantage that I shall reap from this campaign, for La Vendée is submitting. There is nothing more to do in France; and, of course, we shall return together to England. But to-morrow for serious business!'"

The note dropped from her hands: she closed her eyes, kept the deepest silence, and remained leaning back, her head resting on a cushion. After a long pause she raised her eyes to the clock, which marked the hour of four.

"And monsieur keeps me waiting!" she said with savage irony.

"Oh! if he only would not come!" cried Francine.

"If he did not come," said Marie in a stifled voice, "I would go myself to meet him! But no! he cannot be long now. Francine, am I very beautiful?"

"You are very pale."

"Look!" went on Mlle. de Verneuil, "look at this per-

fumed chamber, these flowers, these lights, this intoxicating vapour! Might not all this give a foretaste of heaven to him whom to-night I would plunge in the joys of love?"

"What is the matter, mademoiselle?"

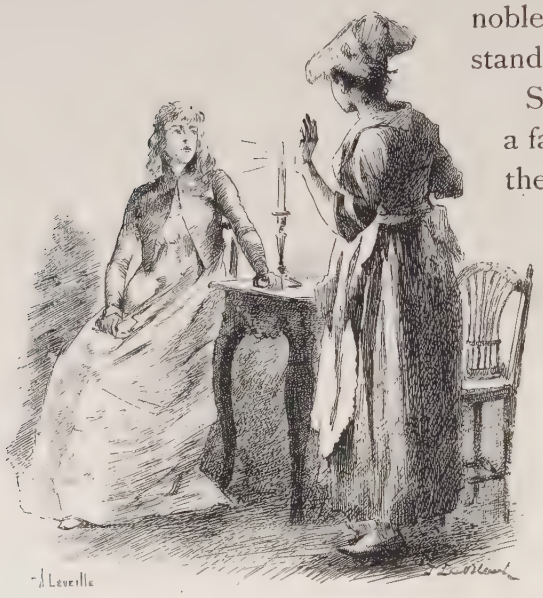
"I am betrayed, deceived, abused, tricked, cheated, ruined! And I will kill him; I will tear him in pieces. Why, yes! there was always in his manner a scorn which he hid but ill, and which I did not choose to see. Oh! it will kill me! Fool that I am," said she, with a laugh. "He comes! I have the night in which to teach him that, whether I be married or no, a man who has once possessed me can never abandon me! I will suit my vengeance to his offence, and he shall die despairing! I thought he had some greatness in his soul: but doubtless 'tis a lackey's son. Assuredly he was clever enough in deceiving me, for I still can hardly believe that the man who was capable of handing me over without compassion to Pille-Miche could descend to a trick worthy of Scapin. 'Tis so easy to dupe a loving woman, that it is the basest of coward's deeds! That he should kill me, well and good! That he should *lie*, he whom I have exalted so high! To the scaffold! To the scaffold! Ah! I would I could see him guillotined! And am I after all so very cruel? He will die covered with kisses and caresses which will have been worth to him twenty years of life!"

"Marie," said Francine, with an angelic sweetness, "be your lover's victim, as so many others are: but do not make yourself either his mistress or his executioner. Keep his image at the bottom of your heart, without making it a torture to yourself. If there were no joy in hopeless love, what would become of us, weak women that we are? That God, Marie, on whom you never think, will reward us for having followed our vocation on earth—our vocation to love and to suffer!"

"Kitten!" answered Mlle. de Verneuil, patting Francine's hand. "Your voice is very sweet and very seductive. Reason is attractive indeed in your shape. I would I could obey you."

"You pardon him? You would not give him up?"

"Silence! Speak to me no more of that man. Compared with him, Corentin is a noble being. Do you understand me?"



She rose, hiding under a face of hideous calm both the distraction which seized her and her inextinguishable thirst of vengeance. Her gait, slow and measured, announced a certain irrevocableness of resolve. A prey to thought, devouring the insult, and too proud to confess the least of her torments, she went to the picket at the gate of Saint Léonard to ask where the commandant was staying. She had hardly left her house when Corentin entered it.

"Oh, Monsieur Corentin!" cried Francine, "if you are interested in that young man, save him! Mademoiselle is going to give him up. This wretched paper has ruined all!"

Corentin took the letter carelessly, asking, "And where has she gone?"

"I do not know."

"I will hasten," said he, "to save her from her own despair."

He vanished, taking the letter with him, left the house quickly, and said to the little boy who was playing before the door, "Which way did the lady who has just come out go?"

Galope-Chopine's son made a step or two with Corentin to show him the steep street which led to the Porte Saint Léonard. "That way," said he, without hesitation, obeying the instinct of vengeance with which his mother had inspired his heart.

At the same moment four men in disguise entered Mlle. de Verneuil's house without being seen either by the little boy or by Corentin.

"Go back to your post," said the spy. "Pretend to amuse yourself by twisting the shutter latches: but keep a sharp look-out and watch everything, even on the house-tops."

Corentin darted quickly in the direction pointed out by the boy, thought he recognized Mlle. de Verneuil through the fog, and actually caught her up at the moment when she reached the guard at Saint Léonard's.

"Where are you going?" said he, holding out his arm. "You are pale. What has happened? Is it proper for you to go out alone like this? Take my arm."

"Where is the commandant?" asked she.

Mlle. de Verneuil had scarcely finished the words when she heard the movement of a reconnoitring party outside Saint Léonard's Gate, and soon she caught Hulot's deep voice in the midst of the noise. "God's thunder!" cried he, "I never saw darker weather than this to make rounds in. The *ci-devant* has the clerk of the weather at his orders."

"What are you grumbling at?" answered Mlle. de Verneuil, pressing his arm hard. "This fog is good to cover vengeance as well as perfidy. Commandant," added she, in

a low voice, "the question is how to concert measures with me so that the Gars cannot escape to-day."

"Is he at your house?" asked Hulot, in a voice the emotion of which showed his wonder.

"No," she answered. "But you must give me a trusty man, and I will send him to warn you of the marquis's arrival."

"What are you thinking of?" said Corentin eagerly, to Marie. "A soldier in your house would alarm him: but a child (and I know where to find one) will inspire no distrust."

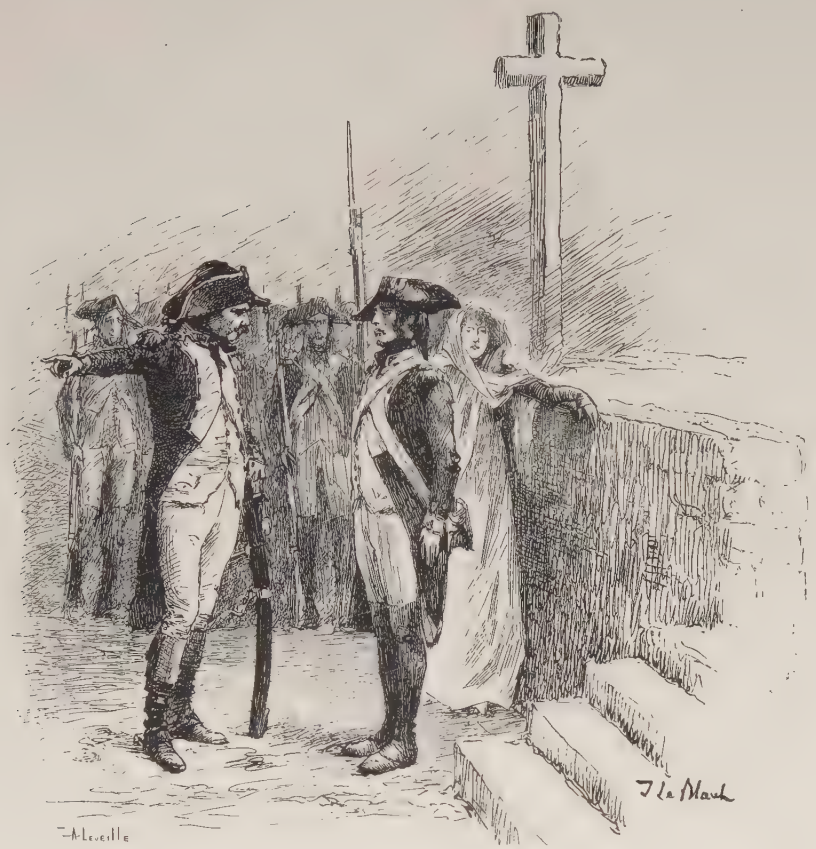
"Commandant," went on Mlle. de Verneuil, "thanks to the fog you are cursing you can surround my house this very moment. Set soldiers everywhere. Place a picket in Saint Léonard's church to make sure of the esplanade on which the windows of my drawing-room open. Post men on the Promenade, for though the window of my room is twenty feet above the ground, despair sometimes lends men strength to cover the most dangerous distances. Listen! I shall probably send this gentleman away by the door of my house: so be sure to give none but a brave man the duty of watching it, for," said she, with a sigh, "no one can deny him courage, and he will defend himself!"

"Gudin!" cried the commandant, and the young Fougerese started from the midst of the force which had come back with Hulot, and which had remained drawn up at some distance.

"Listen, my boy," said the old soldier to him in a low voice. "This brimstone of a girl is giving up the Gars to us. I do not know why, but that does not matter: it is no business of ours. Take ten men with you and post yourself so as to watch the close at the end of which the girl's house is: but take care that neither you nor your men are seen."

"Yes, commandant: I know the ground."

"Well, my boy," went on Hulot, "Beau-Pied shall come and tell you from me when you must draw fox. Try to get up with the marquis yourself, and kill him if you can: so that I may not have to shoot him by form of law. You



shall be lieutenant in a fortnight, or my name is not Hulot. Here, mademoiselle, is a fellow who will not shirk," said he to the young lady, pointing to Gudin. "He will keep good watch before your house, and if the *ci-devant* comes out or tries to get in, he will not miss him."

Gudin went off with half a score of soldiers.

"Are you quite sure what you are doing?" whispered

Corentin to Mlle. de Verneuil. She answered him not, but watched with a kind of satisfaction the departure of the men who, under the sub-lieutenant's orders, went to take up their post on the Promenade, and of those who, according to Hulot's instructions, posted themselves along the dark walls of Saint Léonard's.

"There are houses adjoining mine," she said to the commandant. "Surround them too. Let us not prepare regret for ourselves by neglecting one single precaution that we ought to take."

"She has gone mad!" thought Hulot.

"Am I not a prophet?" said Corentin in his ear. "The child I mean to send into the house is the little boy Bloody Foot, and so——"

He did not finish. Mlle. de Verneuil had suddenly sprung towards her house, whither he followed her, whistling cheerfully, and when he caught her up she had already gained the door, where Corentin also found Galope-Chopine's son.

"Mademoiselle," said he to her, "take this little boy with you. You can have no more unsuspicious or more active messenger. When" (and he breathed as it were in the child's ear) "you see the Gars come in, whatever they tell you, run away, come and find me at the guard-house, and I will give you enough to keep you in cakes for the rest of your life."

The youthful Breton pressed Corentin's hand hard at these words, and followed Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Now, my good friends!" cried Corentin, when the door shut, "come to an explanation when you like! If you make love now, my little marquis, it will be on your shroud!"

But then, unable to make up his mind to lose sight of the fateful abode, he directed his steps to the Promenade, where he found the commandant busy in giving some orders. Soon night fell: and two hours passed without the different

sentinels who were stationed at short distances perceiving anything which gave suspicion that the marquis had crossed the triple line of watchful lurkers who beset the three accessible sides of the Papegaut's Tower. A score of times Corentin had gone from the Promenade to the guard-house : as often his expectation had been deceived, and his youthful emissary had not come to meet him. The spy, lost in thought, paced the Promenade, a victim to the tortures of three terrible contending passions, love, ambition, and greed. Eight struck on all the clocks. The moon rose very late, so that the fog and the night wrapped in ghastly darkness the spot where the tragedy devised by this man was about to draw to its catastrophe. The agent of police managed to stifle his passions, crossed his arms tightly on his breast, and never turned his eyes from the window which rose like a phantom of light above the tower. When his steps led him in the direction of the glens which edged the precipice, he mechanically scrutinized the fog which was furrowed by the pale glow of some lights burning here and there in the houses of the town and suburbs above and below the rampart. The deep silence which prevailed was only disturbed by the murmur of the Nançon, by the mournful peals from the belfry at intervals, by the heavy steps of the sentinels, or by the clash of arms as they came, hour after hour, to relieve guard. Mankind and nature alike —all had become solemn.

It was just at this time that Pille-Miche observed, " It is as black as a wolf's throat ! "

" Get on with you ! " answered Marche-à-Terre, " and don't speak any more than a dead dog does ! "

" I scarcely dare draw my breath," rejoined the Chouan.

" If the man who has just displaced a stone wants my knife sheathed in his heart, he has only got to do it again,"

whispered Marche-à-Terre in so low a voice that it blended with the ripple of the Nançon waters.

"But it was me," said Pille-Miche.

"Well, you old money-bag," said the leader, "slip along on your belly like a snake, or else we shall leave our carcasses here before the time!"

"I say, Marche-à-Terre!" went on the incorrigible Pille-Miche, helping himself with his hands to hoist himself along on his stomach and reach the level where was his comrade, into whose ear he whispered, so low that the Chouans who followed them could not catch a syllable, "I say, Marche-à-Terre! if we may trust our Grande-Garce, there must be famous booty up there! Shall we two share?"

"Listen, Pille-Miche!" said Marche-à-Terre, halting, still flat on his stomach: and the whole body imitated his movement, so exhausted were the Chouans by the difficulties which the scarped rock offered to their progress.

"I know you," went on Marche-à-Terre, "to be one of those honest Jack Take-alls who are quite as ready to give blows as to receive them when there is no other choice. We have not come here to put on dead men's shoes: we are devil against devil, and woe to those who have the shortest nails. The Grande-Garce has sent us here to save the Gars. Come, lift your dog's face up and look at that window above the tower! He is there."

At the same moment midnight struck. The moon rose and gave to the fog the aspect of a white smoke. Pille-Miche clutched Marche-à-Terre's arm violently, and, without speaking, pointed to the triangular steel of some glancing bayonets ten feet above them.

"The Blues are there already," said he, "we shall do nothing by force."

"Patience!" answered Marche-à-Terre, "if I examined the whole place rightly this morning we shall find at the foot of the Papegaut's Tower, between the ramparts and the Promenade, a little space where they constantly store manure, and on which a man can drop from above as on a bed."

"If Saint Labre," said Pille-Miche, "would graciously change the blood which is going to flow into good cider, the men of Fougères would find store of it to-morrow!"

Marche-à-Terre covered his friend's mouth with his broad hand. Then a caution, given under his breath, ran from file to file to the very last Chouan who hung in the air, clinging to the briars of the schist. Indeed, Corentin's ear was too well trained not to have heard the rustle of some bushes which the Chouans had pulled about, and the slight noise of the pebbles rolling to the bottom of the precipice, standing as he did on the edge of the esplanade. Marche-à-Terre, who seemed to possess the gift of seeing in the dark, or whose senses, from their continual exercise, must have acquired the delicacy of those of savages, had caught

sight of Corentin. Perhaps, like a well-broken dog, he had even scented him. The detective listened in vain through the silence, stared in vain at the natural wall of schist: he could discover nothing there. If the deceptive glimmer of the fog allowed him to perceive some Chouans, he took them for pieces of rock, so well did these human bodies preserve the air of inanimate masses. The danger which the party ran was of brief duration. Corentin was drawn off by a very distinct noise which was audible at the other end of the Promenade, where the supporting wall ceased and the rapid slope of the cliff began. A path traced along the border of the schist, and communicating with the Queen's Staircase, ended exactly at this meeting-place. As Corentin arrived there he saw a figure rise as if by magic, and when he put out his hand to grasp this form—of whose intentions, whether it was real or fantastic, he did not augur well—he met the soft and rounded outlines of a woman.

"The deuce take you, my good woman!" said he in a low tone, "if you had met anyone but me, you would have been likely to get a bullet through your head! But whence do you come, and whither are you going at such an hour as this? Are you dumb?

"It is really a woman, though," said he to himself.

As silence was becoming dangerous, the stranger replied, in a tone which showed great fright, "Oh! good man, I be coming back from the *veillée*." [1]

"'Tis the marquis's pretended mother," thought Corentin. "Let us see what she is going to do."

"Well, then, go that way, old woman," he went on aloud,

[1] There is, I believe, more than one local name for this (= "evening party, half for work and half for amusement") in English dialects. But the only one known to literary English is "wake," which has too special and lugubrious a meaning.—*Translator's Note.*

and pretending not to recognize her, "Keep to the left if you don't want to get shot."

He remained where he was: but as soon as he saw Madame du Gua making her way to the Papegaut's Tower, he followed her afar off with devilish cunning. During this fatal meeting the Chouans had very cleverly taken up their position on the manure heaps to which Marche-à-Terre had guided them.

"Here is the Grande-Garce!" whispered Marche-à-Terre, as he rose on his feet against the tower, just as a bear might have done. "We are here!" said he to the lady.

"Good!" answered Madame du Gua. "If you could find a ladder in that house where the garden ends, six feet below the dunghill, the Gars would be saved. Do you see that round window up there? It opens on a dressing-room adjoining the bed-room, and that is where you have to go. The side of the tower at the bottom of which you are, is the only one not watched. The horses are ready: and if you have made sure of the passage of the Nançon, we shall get him out of danger in a quarter of an hour, for all his madness. But if that strumpet wants to come with him, poniard her!"

When Corentin saw that some of the indistinct shapes which he had at first taken for stones were cautiously moving, he at once went off to the guard at the Porte Saint Léonard, where he found the commandant, asleep, but fully dressed, on a camp-bed.

"Let him alone!" said Beau-Pied rudely to Corentin, "he has only just lain down there."

"The Chouans are here!" cried Corentin into Hulot's ear.

"It is impossible: but so much the better!" cried the commandant, dead-asleep as he was. "At any rate we shall have some fighting."

When Hulot arrived on the Promenade, Corentin showed him in the gloom the strange position occupied by the Chouans. "They must have eluded or stifled the sentinels I placed between the Queen's Staircase and the castle," cried the commandant. "Oh, thunder! What a fog! But patience! I will send fifty men under a lieutenant to the foot of the rock. It is no good attacking them where they are, for the brutes are so tough that they would let themselves drop to the bottom of the precipice like stones, without breaking a limb."

The cracked bell of the belfry was sounding two when the commandant came back to the Promenade after taking the strictest military precautions for getting hold of the Chouans commanded by Marche-à-Terre. By this time, all the guards having been doubled, Mlle. de Verneuil's house had become the centre of a small army. The commandant found Corentin plunged in contemplation of the window which shone above the Papegaut's Tower.

"Citizen," said Hulot to him, "I think the *ci-devant* is making fools of us, for nothing has stirred."

"He is there!" cried Corentin, pointing to the window. "I saw the shadow of a man on the blind. But I cannot understand what has become of my little boy. They must have killed him or gained him over. Why, commandant, there is a man for you! Let us advance!"

"God's thunder!" cried Hulot, who had his own reasons for waiting, "I am not going to arrest him in bed! If he has gone in he must come out, and Gudin will not miss him."

"Commandant, I order you in the name of the law to advance instantly upon this house!"

"You are a pretty fellow to think you can set *me* going!"

But Corentin, without disturbing himself at the com-

mandant's wrath, said coolly, "You will please to obey me. Here is an order in regular form, signed by the Minister of War, which will oblige you to do so," he continued, drawing a paper from his pocket. "Do you fancy us fools enough to let that girl do as she pleases? 'Tis a civil war that we are stifling, and the greatness of the result excuses the meanness of the means."

"I take the liberty, citizen, of bidding you go and—— you understand me? Enough! Put your left foot foremost, leave me alone, and do it in less than no time!"

"But read," said Corentin.

"Don't bother me with your commissions!" cried Hulot, in a rage at receiving orders from a creature whom he held so despicable. But at the same moment Galope-Chopine's son appeared in their midst, like a rat coming out of the ground.

"The Gars is on his way!" he cried.

"Which way?"

"By Saint Léonard's Street."

"Beau-Pied," whispered Hulot in the ear of the corporal who was near him, "run and tell the lieutenant to advance on the house, and keep up some nice little file-firing! You understand?——File to the left and march on the tower, you there!" he cried aloud.

In order perfectly to comprehend the catastrophe, it is necessary now to return with Mlle. de Verneuil to her house. When passion comes to a crisis, it produces in us an intensity of intoxication far above the trivial stimulus of opium or of wine. The lucidity which ideas then acquire, the delicacy of the over-excited senses, produce the strangest and the most unexpected effects. When they find themselves under the tyranny of a single thought, certain persons clearly perceive things the most difficult of perception, while the most palpable objects are for them as though they did not

exist. Mlle. de Verneuil was suffering from this kind of intoxication, which turns real life into something resembling the existence of sleep-walkers, when, after reading the marquis's letter, she eagerly made all arrangements to

prevent his escaping her vengeance, just as, but the moment before, she had made every preparation for the first festival of her love. But when she saw her house carefully surrounded, by her own orders, with a triple row of bayonets, her soul was suddenly enlightened. She sat in judgment on her own conduct, and decided, with a kind of horror, that what she had just committed was a crime. In her first

moment of distress she sprang towards the doorstep and stood there motionless for an instant, endeavouring to reflect, but unable to bring any reasoning process to a conclusion. She was so absolutely uncertain what she had just done, that she asked herself why she was standing in the vestibule of her own house, holding a strange child by the hand. Before her eyes thousands of sparks danced in the air like tongues of fire. She began to walk in order to shake off the hideous stupor which had enveloped her, but like a person asleep, she could not realize the true form or colour of any object. She clutched the little boy's hand with a violence foreign to her usual nature, and drew him along with so rapid a step that she seemed to possess the agility of a madwoman. She saw nothing at all in the drawing-room as she crossed it, and yet she received there the salutes of three men, who drew aside to make way for her.

"Here she is!" said one.

"She is very beautiful," cried the priest.

"Yes," answered the first speaker, "but how pale and agitated she is!"

"And how absent!" said the third. "She does not see us."

At her own chamber door Mlle. de Verneuil perceived the sweet and joyful face of Francine, who whispered in her ear: "He is there, Marie!"

Mlle. de Verneuil roused herself, was able to collect her thoughts, looked at the child whose hand she held, and answered Francine: "Lock this little boy up somewhere, and if you wish me to live, take good care not to let him escape."

As she slowly uttered these words she had been fixing her eyes on the chamber door, on which they remained glued with so terrible a stillness that a man might have

thought she saw her victim through the thickness of the panels. She gently pushed the door open, and shut it without turning her back, for she perceived the marquis standing in front of the fireplace. The young noble's dress, without being too elaborate, had a certain festal air of ornament, which heightened the dazzling effect that lovers produce on women. As she saw this, Mlle. de Verneuil recovered all her presence of mind. Her lips—strongly set though half open—exhibited the enamel of her white teeth, and outlined an incomplete smile, the expression of which was one of terror rather than of delight. She stepped slowly towards the young man, and pointing with her finger towards the clock :

"A man who is worth loving is worth the trouble of waiting for him," said she with feigned gaiety.

And then, overcome by the violence of her feelings, she sank upon the sofa which stood near the fireplace.

"Dearest Marie, you are very attractive when you are angry!" said the marquis, seating himself beside her, taking a hand which she abandoned to him, and begging for a glance which she would not give. "I hope," he went on in a tender and caressing tone, "that Marie will in a moment be vexed with herself for having hidden her face from her fortunate husband."

When she heard these words she turned sharply, and stared him straight in the eyes.

"What does this formidable look mean?" continued he, laughing. "But your hand is on fire, my love; what is the matter?"

"Your love?" she answered in a broken and stifled tone.

"Yes!" said he, kneeling before her and seizing both her hands, which he covered with kisses. "Yes, my love! I am yours for life!"

She repulsed him violently and rose; her features were convulsed, she laughed with the laugh of a maniac, and said: "You do not mean a word you say! O, man more deceitful than the lowest of criminals!" She rushed to the dagger which lay by a vase of flowers, and flashed it within an inch or two of the astonished young man's breast.

"Bah!" she said, throwing it down, "I have not respect enough for you to kill you. Your blood is even too vile to be shed by soldiers, and I see no fit end for you but the hangman!"

The words were uttered with difficulty in a low tone, and she stamped as she spoke, like an angry spoilt child. The marquis drew near her, trying to embrace her.

"Do not touch me!" she cried, starting back with a movement of horror.

"She is mad!" said the marquis despairingly to himself.

"Yes!" she repeated, "mad! but not mad enough yet to be your plaything! What would I not pardon to passion? But to wish to possess me without loving me, and to write as much to that——"

"To whom did I write?" asked he, with an astonishment which was clearly not feigned.

"To that virtuous woman who wanted to kill me!"

Then the marquis turned pale, grasped the back of the armchair on which he leant so fiercely that he broke it, and cried, "If Madame du Gua has been guilty of any foul trick——!"

Mlle. de Verneuil looked for the letter, found it not, and called Francine. The Breton girl came.

"Where is the letter?"

"Monsieur Corentin took it."

"Corentin! Ah, I see it all! He forged the letter and deceived me, as he does deceive, with the fiend's own art!"

Then uttering a piercing shriek, she dropped on the sofa to which she staggered, and torrents of tears poured from her eyes. Doubt and certainty were equally horrible. The marquis flung himself at his mistress's feet and pressed her to his heart, repeating a dozen times these words, the only ones he could utter:

"Why weep, my angel? Where is the harm? Even your reproaches are full of love! Do not weep! I love you! I love you for ever!"

Suddenly he felt her embrace him with more than human strength, and heard her amidst her sobs say, "You love me still?"

"You doubt it?" he answered in a tone almost melancholy.

She disengaged herself sharply from his arms, and fled, as if frightened and confused, a pace or two from him: "Do I doubt it?" she cried.

But she saw the marquis smile with such sweet sarcasm that the words died on her lips. She allowed him to take her hand and lead her to the threshold. Then Marie saw at the end of the saloon an altar, which had been hurriedly arranged during her absence. The priest had at that moment arrayed himself in his sacerdotal vestments; lighted tapers cast on the ceiling a glow as sweet as hope; and she recognized in the two men who had bowed to her the Count de Bauvan and the Baron du Guénic, the two witnesses chosen by Montauran.

"Will you again refuse me?" whispered the marquis to her.

At this spectacle she made one step back so as to regain her chamber, fell on her knees, stretched her hands towards the marquis, and cried: "Oh, forgive me! forgive! forgive!"

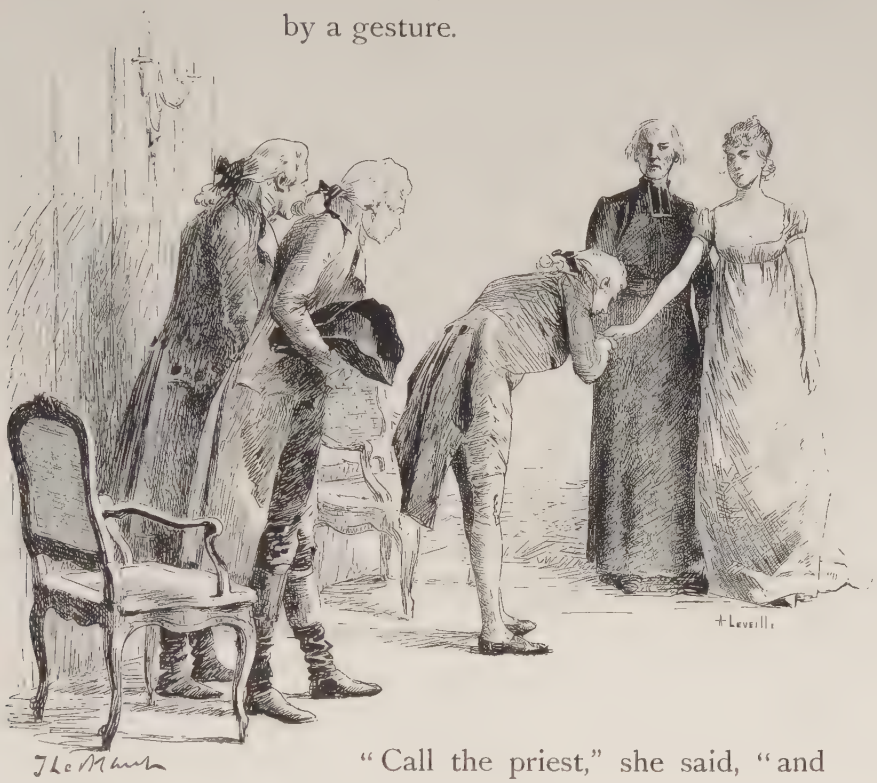
Her voice sank, her head fell back, her eyes closed, and she remained as if lifeless in the arms of the marquis and

of Francine. When she opened her eyes again she met those of the young chief, full of loving kindness:

"Patience, Marie! This storm is the last," said he.

"The last!" she repeated.

Francine and the marquis looked at each other in astonishment, but she bade them be silent by a gesture.



"Call the priest," she said, "and leave me alone with him."

They withdrew.

"Father!" she said to the priest, who suddenly appeared before her. "Father! in my childhood an old man, white-haired like yourself, frequently repeated to me that, with a lively faith, man can obtain everything from God. Is this true?"

"It is true," answered the priest. "Everything is possible to Him who has created everything."

Mlle. de Verneuil threw herself on her knees with wonderful enthusiasm. "Oh, my God!" said she in her ecstasy, "my faith in Thee is equal to my love for him! Inspire me now: let a miracle be done, or take my life!"

"Your prayer will be heard," said the priest.

Then Mlle. de Verneuil presented herself to the gaze of the company, leaning on the arm of the aged white-haired ecclesiastic. Now, when her deep and secret emotion gave her to her lover's love, she was more radiantly beautiful than she had ever been before, for a serenity resembling that which painters delight in imparting to martyrs stamped on her face a character of majesty. She held out her hand to the marquis, and they advanced together to the altar, at which they knelt down. This marriage, which was about to be celebrated but a few steps from the nuptial couch, the hastily-erected altar, the cross, the vases, the chalice brought secretly by the priest, the incense smoke eddying round cornices which had as yet seen nothing but the steam of banquets, the priest vested only in cassock and stole, the sacred tapers in a profane saloon, composed a strange and touching scene which may give a final touch to our sketch of those times of unhappy memory, when civil discord had overthrown the most holy institutions. Then religious ceremonies had all the attraction of mysteries. Children were baptized in the chambers where their mothers still groaned. As of old, the Lord came in simplicity and poverty to console the dying. Nay, young girls received the Holy Bread for the first time in the very place where they had played the night before. The union of the marquis and Mlle. de Verneuil was about to be hallowed, like many others, by an act contravening the new legislation: but later, these marriages, celebrated for the most part at the foot of the oak trees, were all scrupulously legalized. The priest who thus kept up the old usages to the last

moment was one of those men who are faithful to their principles through the fiercest of the storm. His voice, guiltless of the oath which the Republic had exacted, uttered amidst the tempest only words of peace. He did not, as Abbé Gudin had done, stir the fire of discord. But he had, with many others, devoted himself to the dangerous mission of performing the rites of the priesthood for the Catholic remnant of souls. In order to succeed in this perilous ministry, he employed all the pious artifices which persecution necessitates: and the marquis had only succeeded in discovering him in one of the lurking-places which even in our days bear the name of Priests' Holes. The mere sight of his pale and suffering face had such power in inspiring devotion and respect, that it was enough to give to the worldly drawing-room the air of a holy place. All was ready for the act of misfortune and of joy. Before beginning the ceremony, the priest, amid profound silence, asked the name of the bride.

"Marie Nathalie, daughter of Mademoiselle Blanche de Castéran, deceased, sometime abbess of our Lady of Séez, and of Victor Amadeus, Duke of Verneuil."

"Born?"

"At La Chasterie, near Alençon."

"I did not think," whispered the baron to the count, "that Montauran would be silly enough to marry her. A duke's natural daughter! Fie! fie!"

"Had she been a king's it were a different thing," answered the Count de Bauvan with a smile. "But I am not the man to blame him. The other pleases me: and it is with 'Charette's Filly,' as they call her, that I shall make my campaign. *She* is no cooing dove."

The marquis's name had been filled in beforehand: the two lovers signed, and the witnesses after them. The ceremony began, and at the same moment Marie, and she

alone, heard the rattle of the guns and the heavy, measured tramp of the soldiers, who, no doubt, were coming to relieve the guard of Blues that she had had posted in the church. She shuddered, and raised her eyes to the cross on the altar.

"She is a saint at last!" murmured Francine.

And the count added under his breath: "Give me saints like that, and I will be deucedly devout!"

When the priest put the formal question to Mlle. de Verneuil, she answered with a "Yes!" followed by a deep sigh. Then she leant towards her husband's ear, and said to him:

"Before long you will know why I am false to the oath I took never to marry you."

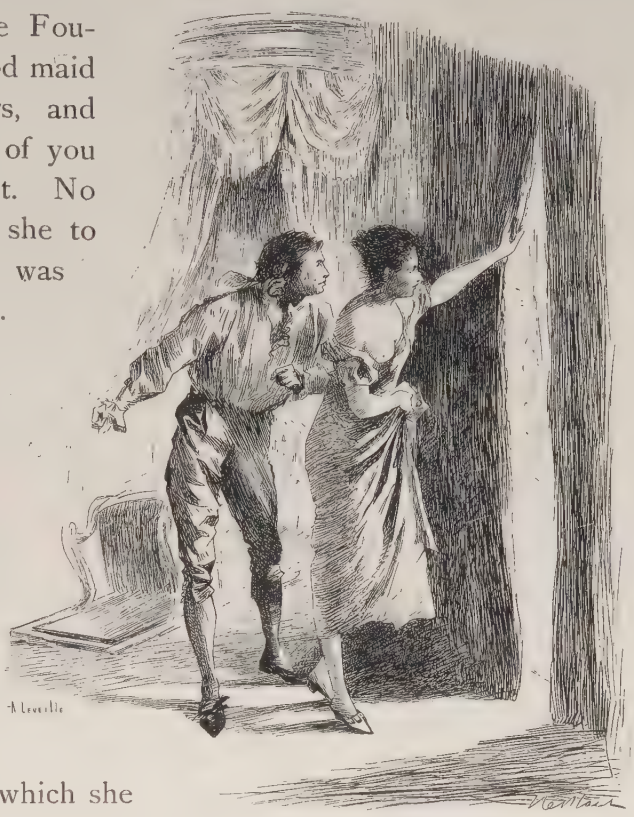
When, after the ceremony, the company had passed into a room where dinner had been served, and at the very moment when the guests were taking their places, Jeremy entered in a state of alarm. The poor bride rose quickly, went, followed by Francine, to meet him, and with one of the excuses which women know so well how to invent, begged the marquis to do the honours of the feast by himself for a short time. Then she drew the servant aside before he could commit an indiscretion, which would have been fatal.

"Ah! Francine. To feel oneself dying and not to be able to say 'I die!'" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, who did not return to the dining-room.

Her absence was capable of being interpreted on the score of the just concluded rite. At the end of the meal, and just as the marquis's anxiety had reached its height, Marie came back in the full gala costume of a bride. Her face was joyous and serene, while Francine, who was with her, showed such profound alarm in all her features that the guests thought they saw in the two countenances some

eccentric picture where the wild pencil of Salvator Rosa had represented Death and Life hand in hand.

"Gentlemen," said she to the priest, the baron, and the count, "you must be my guests this night: for you would run too much risk in trying to leave Fougères. My good maid has her orders, and will guide each of you to his apartment. No mutiny!" said she to the priest, who was about to speak. "I hope you will not disobey a lady's orders on the day of her marriage."



An hour later she found herself alone with her lover in the voluptuous chamber which she had arranged so gracefully. They had come at last to that fateful couch where so many hopes are shattered as though at a tomb, where the chance of waking to a happy life is so doubtful, where true love dies or is born, according to the strength of the character, which is only there truly tested. Marie looked at the clock, and said to herself, "six hours more to live!"

"What! I have been able to sleep!" she cried towards

morning, as she awoke with a start in one of those sudden movements which disturb us when we have arranged with ourselves to wake next day at a certain time. "Yes! I have slept," she repeated, seeing by the glimmer of the candles that the clock hand would soon point to the hour of two in the morning.

She turned and gazed at the marquis, who was asleep, his head resting on one hand, as children sleep, while with the other hand he clasped his wife's, a half-smile on his face as though he had slumbered in the midst of a kiss.

"Ah!" she whispered, "he sleeps like a child! But how could he mistrust me, me who owe him ineffable happiness?"

She touched him gently; he woke and finished the smile. Then he kissed the hand he held, and gazed at the unhappy woman with such fire in his eyes, that unable to bear their passionate blaze, she slowly dropped her ample eyelids, as if to forbid herself a dangerous spectacle. But as she thus veiled the ardour of her own glances, she so provoked desire in the act of seeming to thwart it, that but for the depth of the fear which she tried to hide, her husband might have accused her of excess of coquetry. Both at the same time raised their gracious heads, and still full of the pleasures they had enjoyed, exchanged signs of gratitude. But the marquis, after rapidly examining the exquisite picture which his wife's face presented, attributing to some melancholy thought the cloud which shadowed Marie's brows, said gently to her:

"Why this shadow of sadness, love?"

"Poor Alphonse! Whither do you think I have brought you?" asked she, trembling.

"To happiness——"

"To death!"

And with a shudder of horror she sprang out of bed. The

astonished marquis followed her, and his wife drew him close to the window, after making a frantic gesture, which escaped him. Marie drew the curtain, and pointed out to him with her finger a score of soldiers on the square. The moon which had chased away the fog cast its white light on the uniforms, the guns, the impassive figure of Corentin, who paced to and fro like a jackal waiting for his prey, and the commandant, who stood motionless, his arms crossed, his face lifted, his lips drawn back, ill at ease and on the watch.

"Well, Marie! never mind them, but come back!"

"Why do you smile, Alphonse? 'Twas *I* who placed them there!"

"You are dreaming!"

"No!"

They looked at each other for a moment: the marquis guessed all, and, clasping her in his arms, said:

"There! I love you still!"

"Then all is not lost!" cried Marie. "Alphonse," she said, after a pause, "there is still hope!"

At this moment they distinctly heard the low owl's hoot, and Francine came suddenly out of the dressing-room. "Pierre is there!" she cried with a joy bordering on delirium. Then she and the marchioness dressed Montauran in a Chouan's garb with the wonderful rapidity which belongs only to women. When the marchioness saw her husband busy loading the weapons which Francine had brought, she slipped out deftly, after making a sign of intelligence to her faithful Breton maid. Then Francine led the marquis to the dressing-room which adjoined the chamber; and the young chief, seeing a number of sheets strongly knotted together, could appreciate the careful activity with which the girl had worked to outwit the vigilance of the soldiers.

"I can never get through there," said the marquis, scanning the narrow embrasure of the *œil-de-bœuf*.

But at the same moment a huge dark face filled its oval, and a hoarse voice, well known to Francine, cried in a low tone:

"Be quick, general! These toads of Blues are stirring."

"Oh! one kiss more!" said a sweet quivering voice.

The marquis, whose foot was already on the ladder of deliverance, but a part of whose body was still in the loop-hole, felt himself embraced despairingly. He uttered a cry as he perceived that his wife had put on his own garments. He would have held her, but she tore herself fiercely from his arms, and he found himself obliged to descend. He held a rag of stuff in his hand, and a sudden gleam of moonlight coming to give him light, he saw that the fragment was part of the waistcoat he had worn the night before.

"Halt! Fire by platoons!"

These words uttered by Hulot in the midst of a silence which was terrifying, broke the spell that seemed to reign over the actors and the scene. A salvo of bullets coming from the depths of the valley to the foot of the tower succeeded the volleys of the Blues stationed on the Promenade. The Republican fire was steady, continuous, unpitying: but its victims uttered not a single cry, and between each volley the silence was terrible.

Still Corentin, who had heard one of the aerial forms which he had pointed out to the commandant falling from the upper part of the ladder, suspected some trick.

"Not one of our birds sings," said he to Hulot. "Our two lovers are quite capable of playing some trick to amuse us here, while they are perhaps escaping by the other side."

And the spy, eager to clear up the puzzle, sent Galope-Chopine's son to fetch torches.

Corentin's suggestion was so well understood by Hulot that the old soldier, attentive to the noise of serious fighting in front of the guard at Saint Léonard's, cried, "'Tis

true, there cannot be two of them." And he rushed towards the guard-house.

"We have washed his head with lead, commandant," said Beau-Pied, coming to meet him. "But he has killed Gudin and wounded two men. The madman broke through three lines of our fellows, and would have gained the fields but for the sentinel at the Porte Saint Léonard, who skewered him with his bayonet."

When he heard these words, the commandant hurried into the guard-house, and saw on the camp-bed a bleeding form which had just been placed there. He drew near the seeming marquis, raised the hat which covered his face, and dropped upon a chair.

"I thought so!" he cried fiercely, folding his arms. "Holy thunder! she had kept him too long!"

None of the soldiers stirred. The commandant's action had displaced the long black hair of a woman, which fell down. Then suddenly the silence was broken by the tramp of many armed men. Corentin entered the guard-house in front of four soldiers carrying Montauran, both whose legs and both whose arms had been broken by many gunshots, on a bier formed by their guns. The marquis was laid on the camp-bed by the side of his wife, saw her, and summoned up strength enough to clutch her hand convulsively. The dying girl painfully turned her head, recognized her husband, shuddered with a spasm horrible to see, and murmured these words in an almost stifled voice:

"A Day Without a Morrow! God has heard my prayer too well!"

"Commandant," said the marquis, gathering all his strength, but never quitting Marie's hand, "I count on your honour to announce my death to my younger brother, who is at London. Write to him not to bear arms against

France, if he would obey my last words, but never to abandon the king's service."

"It shall be done," said Hulot, pressing the dying man's hand.

"Take them to the hospital there!" cried Corentin.

Hulot seized the spy by his arm so as to leave the mark of the nails in his flesh, and said, "As your task is done here, get out! and take a good look at the face of Commandant Hulot, so as to keep out of his way, unless you want him to sheath his toasting-iron in your belly!"

And the old soldier half drew it as he spoke.

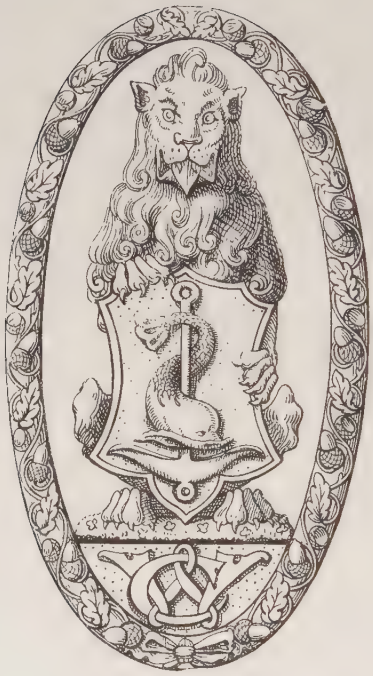
"There is another of your honest folk who will never make their fortune!" said Corentin to himself when he was well away from the guard-house.

The marquis had still strength to thank his foe by moving his head, as a mark of the esteem which soldiers have for generous enemies.

In 1827, an old man, accompanied by his wife, was bargaining for cattle on the market-place of Fougères, without anybody saying anything to him, though he had killed more than a hundred men. They did not even remind him of his surname of Marche-à-Terre. The person to whom the writer owes much precious information as to the characters of this story saw him leading off a cow with that air of simplicity and probity as he went which makes men say, "That is an honest fellow!"

As for Cibot, called Pille-Miche, his end is already known. It may be that Marche-à-Terre made a vain attempt to save his comrade from the scaffold, and was present on the square of Alençon at the terrible riot which was one of the incidents of the famous trial of Rifoël, Briond, and La Chanterie.

H. Leveille



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